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# GARDENS

ILLUSTRATED

## Small gardens issue

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9

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# Welcome



JOHN CAMPBELL

**W**e've reached peak holiday season and with it the perfect moment to enjoy our gardens and outside spaces. There's much talk about the additional demands we now put on our gardens – spaces to entertain, outdoor kitchens and gyms, mindful sanctuaries – and that's before we've even started growing anything, or taken into account current climate concerns.

By way of inspiration this issue, we're highlighting five gardens that each show ingenuity and style in bringing small spaces to life (page 51) for their owners. From a tucked-away city corner, to a surprising urban jungle, the melding of hard and soft landscaping ensure these spaces are used to the full. Plus we ask each of the gardens' designers to give us their top tips when it comes to tackling small spaces (pages 72).

We don't, of course, all have access to our own garden. So how do we adapt our cityscapes and parks to widen access to green spaces? Our Gardening Talent profile this month is with Georgia Smith (page 29), who works on London's Bankside to bring areas of planting wherever possible – be it sunflowers in a tree pit, or a pocket park amid the mix of offices and homes. Her aim is to enliven community ties through a connection to nature.

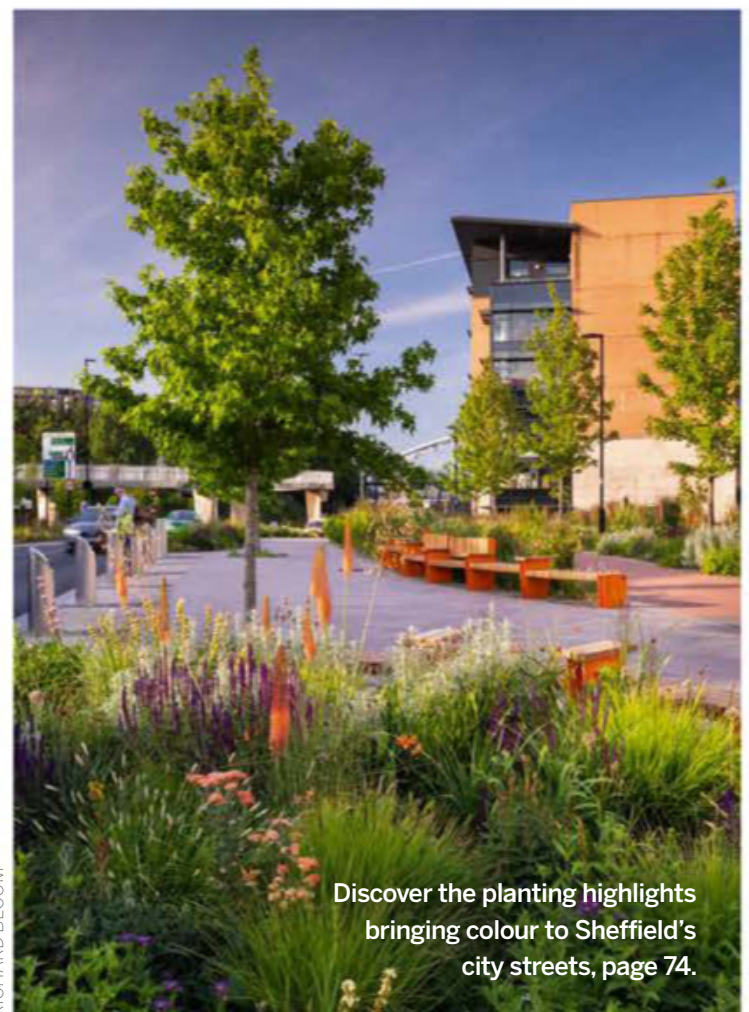
With much the same intent, Nigel Dunnett's involvement in Sheffield's Grey to Green scheme has seen swathes of glorious planting lining city roads (page 74). Not only eye catching, the planting is resilient, offers new pathways and stopping points for pedestrians, and is constructed to mitigate the risks of flooding.

We hope you enjoy the issue and find inspiration to improve our precious outdoor spaces.

*Stephanie Mahon*

STEPHANIE MAHON, EDITOR

 **Website** [gardensillustrated.com](https://gardensillustrated.com)  
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RICHARD BLOOM

Discover the planting highlights  
bringing colour to Sheffield's  
city streets, page 74.



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ROBERT MABIC





Hot colours pack  
a vibrant punch in  
this small Dutch  
garden, page 32.

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Small London garden by  
Alistair Thorpe

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### EVENTS AND OFFERS

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# Contributors



### Noel Kingsbury

Noel visits a cleverly designed and richly planted garden in the Netherlands, page 32. *"This is a garden that embraces colour while also reflecting a distinctly Dutch heritage of design too."*



### Sonya Patel Ellis

Sonya explores a Miria Harris-designed small garden, page 56. *"I love how Miria curated nature to transform this tiny corner into a green oasis and sensory al fresco dining area."*



### Marnie Hawson

Marnie photographs the private family garden of Australian designer Kathleen Murphy, page 90. *"I love Kathleen's gardens so much that I got her to design one for my house."*

## CONTRIBUTING EDITORS



### James Basson

James lives in the South of France where he runs Scape Design, a practice specialising in low-maintenance and dry gardens. He is a fervent advocate for creating sustainable landscapes. The winner of four Chelsea Gold medals, he was awarded Best in Show in 2017.

### Fergus Garrett

Fergus was appointed head gardener at Great Dixter by Christopher Lloyd in 1993. He is passionate about passing on his knowledge through student programmes at Dixter and worldwide lectures. He was awarded an RHS Associate of Honour in 2008 and an RHS Victoria Medal of Honour in 2019.

### Anna Pavord

Anna's books include her bestseller *The Tulip* and most recently *Landskipping*. For 30 years she was *The Independent's* gardening correspondent. In 2000 the RHS awarded her the Veitch Memorial Medal. She lives and gardens in Dorset.

### Dan Pearson

Dan is one of the UK's best-known garden designers, familiar to many through his gardening columns in the *Observer* magazine. Eight of his gardens, including the Tokachi Millennium Forest in Japan, have won awards and he was awarded Best in Show for his garden at Chelsea in 2015.

### Sarah Price

Sarah is one of the UK's most sought-after garden designers who gained worldwide recognition for her designs for the 2012 London Olympic Park. She won Gold at Chelsea in 2012 and 2018, and was GMG Garden Columnist of the Year in 2016 for her design series in *Gardens Illustrated*.



# GARDENS

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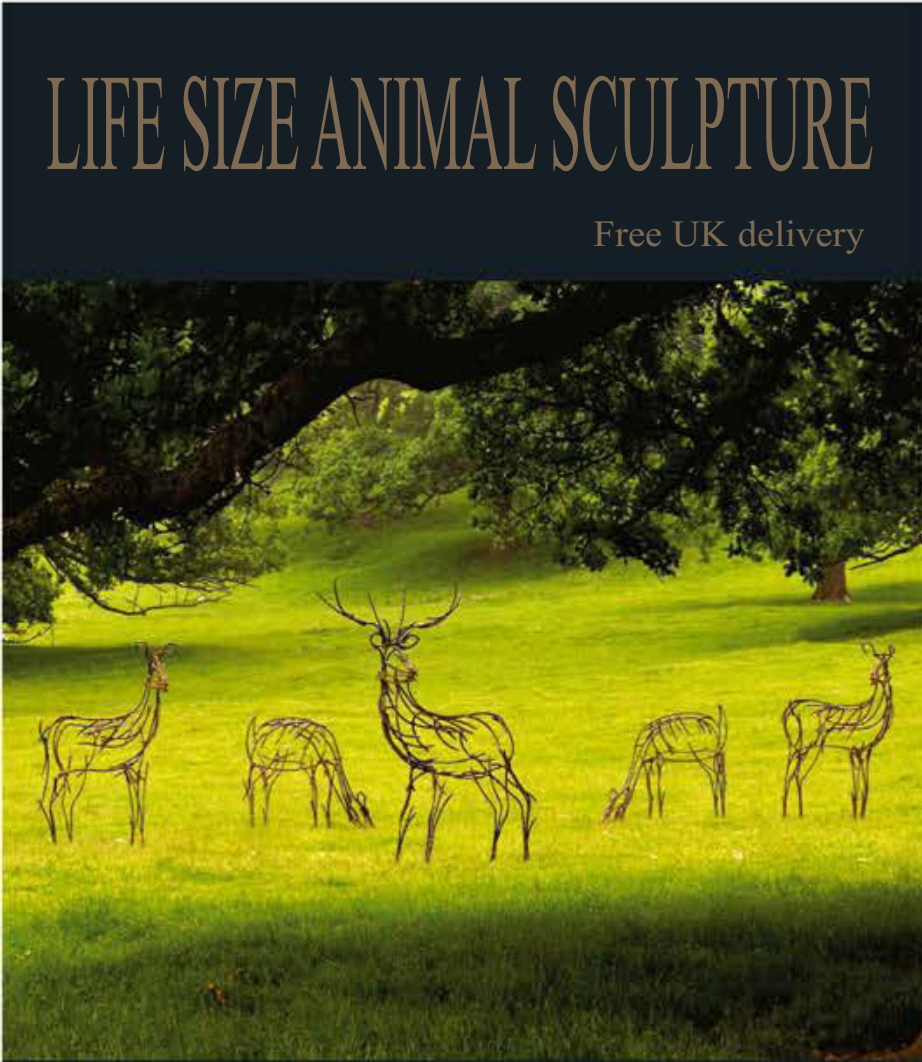
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# DIG IN

What's new, what's growing and what's going on this month



## Platinum fronds

Back in 1952, the year of HM The Queen's accession to the throne, greenhouse manufacturer Hartley created a beautiful Victorian-style Palm House for Brighton & Hove Council to house tropical plants. In the ensuing 70 years the Palm House, which sits at the entrance to the Stanmer Park Estate's walled garden, has sadly fallen into disrepair while the walled garden itself has been given a new lease of life. Thanks to a £5.8 million grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund for the restoration of Stanmer Park's

landscape, the walled garden has been redeveloped by Plumpton College to become One Garden Brighton – a space where visitors can take inspiration from a series of themed gardens, and also learn some new skills. Now to mark The Queen's Platinum Jubilee, One Garden Brighton is launching an appeal to restore the ornate glasshouse to its previous glory. The target is to complete the work and open the glasshouse to the public by 2024, when it will be renamed the Jubilee Palm House. [onegardenbrighton.com](http://onegardenbrighton.com)



# News

COMPILED BY MOLLY BLAIR



PENSTHORPE

## FAIRY HIGHLIGHTS

Many garden lovers will know Pensthorpe in Norfolk for its Piet Oudolf-designed Millennium Garden, which is wonderfully atmospheric in winter. Now the 700-acre nature reserve has a new garden attraction to weave a little magic throughout the year. The Glade Sculpture Garden features evergreen trees, grasses, ferns and wildflowers. The focal point is a bespoke sculpture of a fairy *Alula* (above right) surrounded by three towering dandelion sculptures, all by artist Robin Wight. Dotted throughout the space are mosaics from Primrose Mosaics and Katie Green, and glass sculptures by Jenny Pickford (shown above). Admission to the park starts at £12.95. [pensthorpe.com](http://pensthorpe.com)



### Pretty in pink

If you're searching for a new plant to add months of bright colour to your borders, look out for the new *Geranium* 'Kelly Anne'. Similar to the ever-popular *Geranium* Rozanne (= 'Gerwat'), this compact, low-maintenance hardy geranium has bright-pink flowers with a paler centre and dark-pink veins, and flowers from late spring to the first frost. It won't be widely available until next year but you can find it now at Crocus with prices starting at £7.99. [crocus.co.uk](http://crocus.co.uk)



## HEAD SPACE

Don't miss the second Beth Chatto Symposium – Rewilding the Mind at the University of Essex. Hosted by designer Arit Anderson, the two-day symposium aims to generate a better understanding of the benefits of using plants in an ecological and sustainable way. Speakers include Fergus Garrett, Dave Goulson, Sarah Price, Tom and Sue Stuart-Smith, and Adam Hunt. 1-2 September. Tickets cost £350, which includes a garden party at Beth Chatto Gardens. [bethchatto.co.uk](http://bethchatto.co.uk)



BETH CHATTO





## Pushing the boat out

Earlier this year, you may have seen Chris Beardshaw's Gold medal-winning RNLI garden (right) at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show. Chris is now helping the charity raise much-needed funding for its life-saving work with the launch of a new campaign: RNLI Gardens. Anyone can sign up to host a garden-focussed fundraiser, whether that be a tea party or plant sale in your garden, a family barbecue, or even a picnic in the park, and encourage their guests to donate to the charity via a fundraising page. You'll find plenty of ideas for events, as well as a wealth of materials, from invitation cards to RNLI bunting, to help make your summer event a success at [rnli.org/gardens](http://rnli.org/gardens)



*Végétal* features designs from the Chaumet archives, including Joseph Chaumet's hellebore, primrose and dianthus designs for brooches, c. 1890



## Beauty in nature

Should you be planning a trip to Paris this summer be sure to catch the final few weeks of *Végétal – L'École de la beauté*, at the Palais des Beaux-Arts. Held in conjunction with jewellers Maison Chaumet, the exhibition invites visitors to look at nature through the universal prism of art and beauty. It's been created as an imagined herbarium by botanist Marc Jeanson, and includes artworks in different media, including paintings, textiles, furniture and jewellery from Chaumet and other houses. Until 4 September. [beauxartsparis.fr](http://beauxartsparis.fr)

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# DIARY: AUGUST

COMPILED BY MOLLY BLAIR AND ANNIE GATTI

## 1 Tracey Emin: I Lay Here For You

Jupiter Artland's newest permanent artwork, Tracey Emin's *I Lay Here For You* (right), forms the centrepiece of a new exhibition. Alongside the new 6m bronze, sited by Emin in a beech grove, will be new works presented by the artist in Jupiter's indoor gallery spaces. Until 2 October, 10am-4pm. Included in garden admission of £10. Jupiter Artland, Bonnington House, Steadings, Wilkieston, Edinburgh EH27 8BY. Tel 01506 889900, [jupiterartland.org](http://jupiterartland.org)

## 2 Flower Farm Tour

Take a guided tour with Georgie Newbery from Common Farm Flowers around the farm's seven acres of garden and cut flower patches and learn more about how a flower farm works. 10 August, 12pm and 6pm. £15. Common Farm Flowers, Barrow Lane, Charlton Musgrove, Somerset BA9 8HN. Tel 01963 32883, [commonfarmflowers.com](http://commonfarmflowers.com)

## 3 Forest Bathing at the National Botanic Garden of Wales

Join a guided forest bathing session and mindfully immerse your senses among the trees to enjoy the benefits this brings to mind, body and soul. Forest bathing, which has its roots in Japan, has been shown to have wide-ranging benefits, including reducing stress and anxiety while increasing concentration and creativity. 16 August, 10.30am-12pm. £25. National Botanic Garden of Wales, Middleton Hall, Llanarthne, Carmarthenshire SA32 8HN. Tel 01558 667149, [botanicgarden.wales](http://botanicgarden.wales)

## 4 Morning Summer Garden Design Walk – LCGD

Join Andrew Fisher Tomlin and Andrew Wilson, directors of the London College of Garden Design, on a walking tour of RHS Garden Wisley that will explore and analyse many of its design features. 16 August, 10.30am-1pm. £65. RHS Garden Wisley, Surrey GU232 6QB. Tel 01483 762955, [lcgd.org.uk](http://lcgd.org.uk)

## 5 Rosemoor Flower Show

The season's floral celebrations continue in North Devon this month with the RHS Garden Rosemoor Flower Show. Featuring live demonstrations and music alongside specialist nurseries and knowledgeable growers. 19-21 August, 10am-6pm. From £22.95. RHS Garden Rosemoor, Great Torrington, Devon EX38 8PH. Tel 01805 624067, [rhs.org.uk](http://rhs.org.uk)

## 6 Introduction to Dry-stone Walling

Try your hand at creating a dry-stone wall on this one-day introductory course with professional waller John Hulbert at RHS Harlow Carr. Sturdy shoes or boots and tough gloves advisable. 20 August, 10am-4pm. £69. RHS Garden Harlow Carr, Crag Lane, Harrogate, North Yorkshire HG3 1QB. Tel 01423 565418, [rhs.org.uk](http://rhs.org.uk)

## 7 Late Summer Plant Fair

Hole Park Gardens, which usually opens only on Wednesdays and Thursdays, will be opening its gates for a special Saturday plant fair in August. Nurseries including Pineview Plants and Rose Cottage Plants will be in attendance and the tea rooms will be serving lunch and cakes. 21 August, 11am-4pm. £10. Hole Park, Benenden Road, Rolvenden, Cranbrook, Kent TN17 4JA. Tel 01580 241344, [plant-fairs.co.uk](http://plant-fairs.co.uk)

## 8 Summertime

Relax with a picnic in the grounds of opera garden West Green House and enjoy a lunchtime concert of easy-listening classics, including Gershwin's famous lullaby from *Porgy and Bess*. 27 August, 12pm. £47. West Green House Gardens, Thackham's Lane, nr Hartley Wintney, Hook, Hampshire RG27 8JB. Tel 01252 848676, [westgreenhouse.co.uk](http://westgreenhouse.co.uk)

## 9 Glyndebourne Open Gardens

Twelve acres of gardens surrounding the famous East Sussex opera house will be open to the public for one weekend in September. Highlights include the heavily scented Urn Garden and the sunken Bourne Garden. 3-4 September, from 11am. £12. Glyndebourne, Lewes, East Sussex BN8 5UU. Tel 01273 815000, [glyndebourne.com](http://glyndebourne.com)

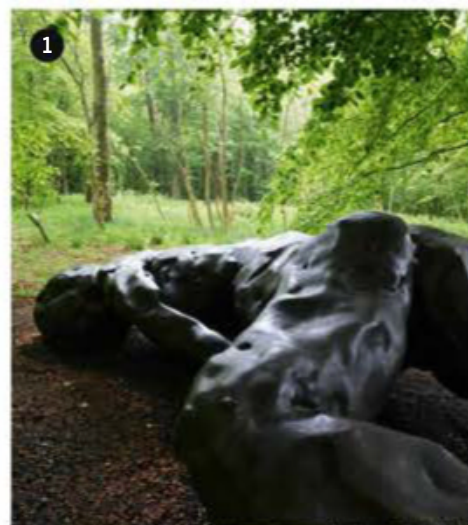
## 10 Landscape Trade Show

Register now for the industry trade show LANDSCAPE, which brings together garden designers, landscape architects and more from across the UK and beyond. 28-29 September, 10am-5pm. National Exhibition Centre, North Avenue, Birmingham B40 1NT. [landscapeshow.co.uk](http://landscapeshow.co.uk)

All information is correct at time of going to press, but may be subject to change.

Tickets for events may be limited and may have to be booked in advance.

Please be sure to check all opening times and advice on any local restrictions before travelling.



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# KITTED OUT

Stylish and space-saving ideas for small gardens

COMPILED BY NIKI GOSS



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1. **Metal Watering Can**, French green, 0.9L, £16, toa.st
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3. **Indoor Outdoor Bean Bag Lounger**, palm pumice, £290, 01580 753903, [armadillosun.com](http://armadillosun.com)
4. **Woody Wall Tank Space-saving Water Butt**, 350L, tap included, W 124cm x D 40cm x H 100cm, £399.99, 01608 661500, [garantiauk.co.uk](http://garantiauk.co.uk)
5. **Cosiscoop Basket Fire Lantern**, olive, Ø 26cm x H 31cm, £150, 0330 433 9899, [ruma.co.uk](http://ruma.co.uk)
6. **Standing Water Feature**, round, glass fibre concrete with treated beech wood legs, Ø 32cm x H 33cm, £150, 0330 333 2123, [coxandcox.co.uk](http://coxandcox.co.uk)
7. **Plant Rack**, lockable wheels, W 100cm x D 35cm x H 170cm, £660, 020 7739 1869, [scp.co.uk](http://scp.co.uk)
8. **Roam Ultra Portable Smart Speakers**, sunset, olive and wave, W 6.2cm x D 6cm x H 16.8cm, £179, [sonos.com](http://sonos.com)





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### DAHLIA 'MAGENTA STAR'

This is one of the best single-flowered dahlias, with generous magenta blooms that stand out perfectly against its soft-purple foliage and almost-black stems. It can, however, be tricky to grow, so it's best to lift the tubers in the autumn for winter storage. These can be divided and planted in spring, although we usually get most success by forcing tubers in late winter under glass and harvesting basal cuttings from these mother plants. It is important to get strong tubers for overwintering so we always do this by growing some stock in the kitchen garden. AGM\*.

**Height and spread** 1.5m x 1.5m.

**Origin** Garden (species Mexico and Central America).

**Conditions** Fertile soil; full sun.

**Hardiness** RHS H3, USDA 8a-11†.

**Season of interest** June – November.



CHARLIE HOPKINSON



**Tom Coward** is head gardener at Gravetye Manor in West Sussex [gravetyemanor.co.uk](http://gravetyemanor.co.uk)

# August plants

Tom's effusive summer borders encompass a huge range of colour and form, from a velvety-red clematis and a starry lilac aster, to wafting grasses and a tiny waterlily

WORDS TOM COWARD PHOTOGRAPHS JASON INGRAM



## *Pennisetum macrochloa*

The African feather grass is a very attractive perennial from South Africa with mounds of fine, evergreen foliage and tall, waving stems sporting interesting bottlebrush-like flowers. It spreads slowly through stolons but in some parts of the world, such as New Zealand, it is voracious and has become a noxious weed. Thankfully, it behaves itself in our climate, offering a distinctive vertical feature in the border with a translucent quality, adding special movement to any planting. It makes a very pretty element when run through dense groups of asters. AGM.

**Height and spread** 1.5m x 50cm.

**Origin** South Africa.

**Conditions** Free-draining soil; full sun.

**Hardiness** RHS H3, USDA 8a-10b.

**Season of interest** Foliage all year round, flowers from July,

## *Persicaria orientalis*

With the wonderful common name of kiss-me-over-the-garden-gate, this striking annual persicaria will always grab your attention. It will self-seed freely, with its distinct, heart-shaped-leaved seedlings appearing in the borders in April and May. Its shiny black seeds need cold treatment before germinating so sowing is best done in autumn, leaving the seed tray in the cold frame for a spring germination. Its tall, arching habit demands that it is staked and it is fun to weave through planting, slipping it into the tightest gaps at the back of the border.

**Height and spread** 1.5m x 30cm.

**Origin** East and southeast Asia, Australia.

**Conditions** Moisture-retentive soil; full sun. Performs best when sheltered from strong winds.

**Hardiness** RHS H7, USDA 4a-8b.

**Season of interest** August – November.



## *Hydrangea paniculata* 'Big Ben'

An excellent selection with large panicles opening greenish-white, turning white and then maturing to deep pink. It also has a wonderful fragrance. It will grow into a broad, spreading shrub, although we keep ours more compact by pruning back the new growth to a permanent framework at the end of winter. Not only does this control the shrub's size but it will also increase the size of the flowers. Makes an interesting combination when planted with *Cleome hassleriana* 'Helen Campbell'. AGM.

**Height and spread** 2m x 2m, depending on pruning.

**Origin** China.

**Conditions** Moist but well-drained soil; full sun or partial shade. Feed after pruning.

**Hardiness** RHS H5, USDA 3a-8b.

**Season of interest** August – November.

\*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. Hardiness ratings given where available.



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### ASTER PYRENAEUS 'LUTETIA'

An excellent, early flowering aster that will start in July and continue through to October. The compact mounds of interlaced, branching stems are covered in pale lilac-blue flowers, with finely rayed petals 5cm across and bright-yellow anthers. Always popular with bees, it is best grown through a pea-stick cage to prevent the plant from collapsing, and it appreciates being divided every four to six years. It's extremely effective repeated along the front of a border, and combines well with *Bistorta amplexicaulis* 'Pink Elephant'. It has the added advantage of never suffering from mildew.

**Height and spread** 50cm x 50cm.

**Origin** France and Spain.

**Conditions** Moist but well-drained soil; full sun.

**Hardiness** RHS H7, USDA 5a-8b.

**Season of interest** July – October.

### NYMPHAEA 'PYGMAEA HELVOLA'

Possibly the tiniest of all hardy waterlilies, with charming little pale-yellow flowers, just 4cm across. The foliage is also beautiful, spreading to cover about 45cm diameter of water. The tiny pads, about the size of a pound coin, are dark green, marbled with maroon. Should be grown about 15cm below the surface of the water and fed regularly with waterlily fertiliser tablets. The best plant we have is grown in an aquatic pot, submerged in a large stone bowl that is regularly topped up with water. This way its petite beauty can be enjoyed close up. AGM.

**Height and spread** 10cm x 45cm.

**Origin** Hybrid from the Latour-Marliac nursery, Brodoux, France.

**Hardiness** RHS H5, USDA 4a-10b.

**Conditions** Full sun.

**Season of interest** June – September.



### VERBENA MACDOUGALII 'LAVENDER SPIRES'

This beautiful, vigorous and useful cultivar was selected by Marina Christopher at her nursery, Phoenix Perennials. It has a long flowering season from June until first frosts and makes a good structural plant through the winter. Unlike its promiscuous relative, *Verbena bonariensis*, it is sterile, so doesn't self-seed, making it a more manageable border plant. It's easily propagated by cuttings rooted in a glass of water. We cut plants back by half in June to keep them in proportion and stop them from flopping.

**Height and spread** 2m x 45cm.

**Origin** Garden (species southwest USA and Mexico).

**Conditions** Moist but well-drained soil; full sun or partial shade.

**Hardiness** RHS H5, USDA 9.

**Season of interest** July – November.

## Places to visit

Tom's recommendations for places to see seasonal plants at their best

Be sure to check opening times. Some garden visits may need to be pre-booked.

Sussex is blessed with many remarkable gardens and **Nymans** is a must for any plant lover visiting the area. The heart of the garden we see today was established in the first half of the 20th century by Ludwig Messel, his son Leonard and head gardener, James Comber. As they developed the garden, they sponsored many plant finders working in Asia in

return for their precious new seeds. Today many of these original specimens are champion trees. In 1925-27 James Comber's son, Harold, also undertook expeditions, to Chile and Tasmania, resulting in one of the most remarkable plant collections in England. The Messels also became fascinated by hybridising their new collections, giving rise to many wonderful

garden plants, notably *Eucryphia x nymansensis* 'Nymansay' and *Magnolia x loebneri* 'Leonard Messel'.

The manor house was rebuilt in 1927 by Leonard only to be destroyed by fire in 1947. Today only the ruins remain, engulfed by the gardens. Of particular note are two original specimens of *Magnolia grandiflora* that survived the flames. Under the stewardship of head

gardener Joe Whelen, the interior of the ruin has also been turned into a garden, showcasing the plant heritage and theatrical style associated with the Messels.

Although most of the tree and shrub collections are at their best from March to June, this is a beautiful garden at any time of year and in August the summer borders are at





## CLEMATIS 'GRAVETYE BEAUTY'

This lovely *Clematis texensis* hybrid was raised by Francisque Morel on his nursery in Lyon in 1914. On his retirement he sent his collection to William Robinson at Gravetye, where his head gardener, Ernest Markham, continued Morel's work, giving rise to many great hybrids. This is a delicate clematis with seductively rich-red flowers, the texture of velvet. It benefits from a high-potash liquid feed every two weeks in summer. It often dies back to the ground in winter, but when it does keep any old wood, it can start flowering in June; otherwise it flowers in August.

**Height and spread** 2.5m x 2m.

**Origin** Garden (species East Asia).

**Hardiness** RHS H4, USDA 4a-8b.

**Conditions** Moist, fertile soil; roots in the shade and head in the sun.

**Season of interest** July – September.



## LILIUM LANCIFOLIUM VAR. FORTUNEI

A tall, vigorous and magnificent lily, with striking, orange, pendent flowers speckled with purple dots, hanging from its black stems. It looks spectacular running through the border against a backdrop of the purple foliage of plants such as *Cotinus coggygia* 'Royal Purple'. It has also performed well in our meadows, where it appears to compete successfully among quite coarse grass. It seems to work best in long grass among trees and shrubs in dense clumps and drifts. Easily propagated in late summer from bulbils found in the leaf axis.

**Height and spread** 1.8m x 50cm.

**Origin** China.

**Conditions** Moist but free-draining soil; full sun or partial shade.

**Hardiness** RHS H6, USDA 3a-9b.

**Season of interest** August – September.



## SILPHIUM PERFOLIATUM

A vigorous and dramatic perennial with bright-yellow daisies on long, graceful stems that appear to perforate its pairs of broad, dock-like leaves. It has a long flowering season and is very effective at the back of the border where it needs to be divided regularly to keep it in check. It has also performed very well in the meadow at Gravetye, where we have it planted under some old apple trees among *Helianthus* 'Lemon Queen'. This makes a spectacular show at the end of the season, after the rest of the meadows have been cut and the apples are ripening. AGM.

**Height and spread** 2.5m x 2m.

**Origin** North America.

**Conditions** Moist but well-drained soil; full sun to partial shade, but tolerant of most situations.

**Hardiness** RHS H7, USDA 3a-8b.

**Season of interest** August – September.



▷ their height. Originally designed by Muriel Messel with help from her neighbour William Robinson, they have recently been replanted as a modern interpretation of the Edwardian original. Handcross, nr Haywards Heath, West Sussex RH17 6EB. Tel 01444 405250, [nationaltrust.org.uk](http://nationaltrust.org.uk)

**Beth Chatto's Gardens** continues to be an

inspiration for generations of gardeners. Beth began her work here in 1960, creating a series of gardens, each with very different conditions, showcasing plant selection and positioning. She also established an excellent nursery. Her brilliant books bring her knowledge and gardening skills to life, but if I could recommend just one it would be *Dear Friend*

*and Gardener*. This shows her character and how she gardened in quite a special way. Since her death in 2018 the garden has continued to be loved and cared for. The Dry Garden is always particularly interesting in August, at the end of a hot summer, to see how plants can thrive to make a beautiful garden in harsh, dry conditions. Beth Chatto's Plants and

Gardens, Elmstead Market, Colchester, Essex CO7 7DB. Tel 01206 822007, [bethchatto.co.uk](http://bethchatto.co.uk)

The beautiful seven-acre **Great Comp Garden**, curated by gardener and nurseryman William Dyson, is a lovely garden in spring, but is particularly inspiring for its late-summer colour. It has one of the best salvia collections in the country,

displayed in jaw-dropping style among grasses, shrubs, dahlias and late-season perennials. There is also a nursery specialising in salvias and it is simply impossible to visit without leaving with a love of this genus, and several new plants to grow. Comp Lane, Platt, nr Sevenoaks, Kent TN15 8QS. Tel 01732 885094, [greatcomparden.co.uk](http://greatcomparden.co.uk)





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# THE CONSTANT GARDENER

While some work is required to keep the August garden looking fresh, the month also offers an abundance of fruit and vegetables for the kitchen – and a cornucopia of colourful dahlias

WORDS BENJAMIN POPE ILLUSTRATION CLAIRE HARRUP

**K**eeping everything going in the garden can become a struggle as summer continues, especially if conditions remain hot and dry. While additional watering, feeding and cutting back helps keep things fresh, planting to match conditions is key.

In the borders and cut-flower beds annuals, dahlias and tender salvias work well, though I also find reliable summer-flowering perennials a real help. From South Africa herald many good contenders including agapanthus, kniphofias and pelargoniums and, in mild or coastal areas, you might try half-hardy species such as *Melianthus major* and *Watsonia pillansii*.

In our sunny entrance borders, generous clumps of *Agapanthus* 'Windsor Grey' create dramatic repetition, softened by airy swathes of *Calamintha nepeta* 'Blue Cloud' and the continuous flowering of *Oenothera lindheimeri*. These happily sit alongside other heat lovers, including *Allium* 'Summer Beauty', *Dianthus cruentus* and *Salvia yangii* 'Blue Spire'. Though not technically flowering yet, dark-red forms of *Hylotelephium* add bold contrasting colour

to this planting, my favourites being *H.* 'José Aubergine' and *H.* 'Red Cauli'.

Smaller and sumptuous with dark inky tones is *Agapanthus* 'Indigo Dreams'. Despite being tricky for me to get through winter (I've lost it twice because of wet and cold) I can't resist the depth of colour and so grow it in a container, alongside other tender treasures including *Aeonium* 'Velour' and *Salvia* 'Love and Wishes'. Growing in containers allows you to manipulate the conditions somewhat, offering flexibility in growing medium and location.

For all containers I like to include loam or top soil in the potting mix, which helps maintain good soil structure for healthy root growth. Woodland species get more organic matter (peat-free potting compost or leaf mould) added, while arid- and Mediterranean-region plants have a mix of mostly loam, sand and grit. In winter these containers are moved indoors or placed somewhere sheltered, avoiding the worst of the rain where the drier conditions help the plants cope better with low temperatures. Though for now, they take centre stage and bask in the sun, enjoying the warm conditions while encouraging me to do the same as I sit and enjoy the floral bounty.





### What to sow and plant

As summer continues, both planting and seed sowing slow down in the productive garden. Most biennials should have already been sown but, I'd still give foxgloves and verbascums a go; both will grow quickly in the cooling months to come. However, now is a good time to sow autumn and winter salads and leaves, so that they reach a substantial size before the days become short. Good cultivars include lettuces 'Winter Density' and 'Winter Gem', grown alongside mustard 'Red Frills', rocket and the very hardy lamb's lettuce 'Favor'.

I also like to do a sowing of beetroot, where the hardy earthy leaves make great additions to salads. Given a little protection (fleece or polythene tunnel) they will all happily crop through autumn and winter and into early spring.

Oriental brassicas and perpetual spinach are other plants that will enjoy the months to come, where day length and temperature make them less likely to bolt. Chinese cabbage, pak choi, mibuna and mizuna are worth sowing now, though will appreciate a slightly shady spot if temperatures remain hot.

### What to harvest and pick

August sees the garden bursting with produce as salads and roots are cropping well, alongside aubergines, chillies, cucumbers and tomatoes, all of which I grow in containers or the greenhouse to protect from any cold, wet weather. The elongated forms of aubergine 'Farmers Long' and beetroot 'Cylindra' lend themselves to culinary use, while the sweet pepper 'Doux tres long des Landes' looks great on the plant or plate. Chilli 'Chocolate Habanero' is spicier, though tempered with a fruity, aromatic flavour. In the orchard plums and gages are ripening, with sloes colouring up in the hedgerows for that important winter tippie.

Dahlias are top of my list for cut flowers. If space is limited, smaller-flowered cultivars are easier to arrange. My favourites are the pompoms *D.* 'New Baby' and *D.* 'Rocco', bi-coloured singles *D.* Happy Single First Love (= 'HS First Love') and *D.* Happy Single Wink (= 'HS Wink'), and new discoveries *D.* 'Sarah Raven' and *D.* 'Kelsey Annie Joy'. □

• Benjamin's *Gardens Illustrated* Masterclass: Grow a year-round, productive garden is available at [gardensillustrated.com](http://gardensillustrated.com)

## GARDEN JOBS for August

**Cut back lavender** Now is the perfect time to cut back lavender, removing most of the new growth if you want to keep plants compact and healthy. Any lavender flowers can be dried then used for arrangements, cooking or fragrant oils.

**Maintain water features** Clean ponds and water features now to avoid disturbing wildlife during the critical winter months of hibernation or reproductive months of spring and early summer. Remove excessive pond sludge and weed growth and if needed treat with organic algacides to control algae or blanket weed.

**Propagate tender perennials** Take semi-ripe cuttings of tender perennials including *Helichrysum petiolare* and *Pelargonium tomentosum*. The rooted cuttings will take up less indoor space in winter, providing you with young vigorous plants next year.

**Plant bearded iris** Summer is a good time to lift and divide bearded iris and order bareroot stock of any new cultivars. Trim leaves and remove sections of old rhizomes before replanting.

**Order bulbs** Plan your spring-flowering bulbs now and start ordering from online nurseries to ensure you get the cultivars you want and that they are delivered fresh, directly to your door for autumn planting.



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GARDENING TALENT

## GEORGIA SMITH

Working to bring greenery to London's Bankside, Georgia also wants to involve the community in their environment

PORTRAIT ANDREW MONTGOMERY

**First plant love** Lavender – my mum would always pick out lavender for me to sniff as she was interested in aromatherapy. I'd like to encourage this sort of early connection with plants with my young cousins.

**Who has inspired you?** My grandparents have been key. I went back to Jamaica to visit them when I was 14 and it really opened my eyes to see the way they were growing bananas, oranges and avocados, all in the garden. I was struck by their passion for their land and landscape. It's something that has encouraged me to think about the importance of connecting people to an urban landscape.

**What did you do before gardening?** I started working in retail but then I realised you could do a qualification in horticulture. I took a course at Writtle University College in Essex, which covered all aspects of the industry.

**Horticultural heroes** I loved Alys Fowler's BBC television series *The Edible Garden*. She showed how gardening could be a lifestyle – her approach felt very whole. I also like how James Wong links back to the horticulture of his heritage, as well as highlighting plants with medicinal uses.

**Favourite gardens** I admire Beth Chatto's Gardens and the way in which a visit allows you to trace her own planting journey. It's a real blueprint for how to plant a garden.

**Three worthwhile tips** Get on and do it! Don't overthink things and just give it a try. It's trial and error – every time you sow a seed it's a lottery and it's often surprising to see what does survive. And don't underestimate the benefits of getting to know your neighbours and your community, both for their knowledge and for asking them to keep an eye on your plants when you're away.

**Gardeners biggest challenge.** We're trained to look after parks and large gardens rather than the urban landscape. The concept of what constitutes a garden is changing, so we need the understanding and knowledge to create and look after a whole range of garden spaces.

**Favourite social media** @cloudgardeneruk has great ideas for gardening in a small space on his 18th-floor balcony, and even how to improve biodiversity. The ideas he shares here are relatable and honest.

**Aims for your career** To champion community gardening and encourage women and ethnic minorities to take part.

**Contact** gsubangardening@gmail.com. Georgia works for Better Bankside in Southwark, south London, with a focus on creating both permanent and temporary pocket parks within this mixed urban environment. [betterbankside.co.uk](http://betterbankside.co.uk)



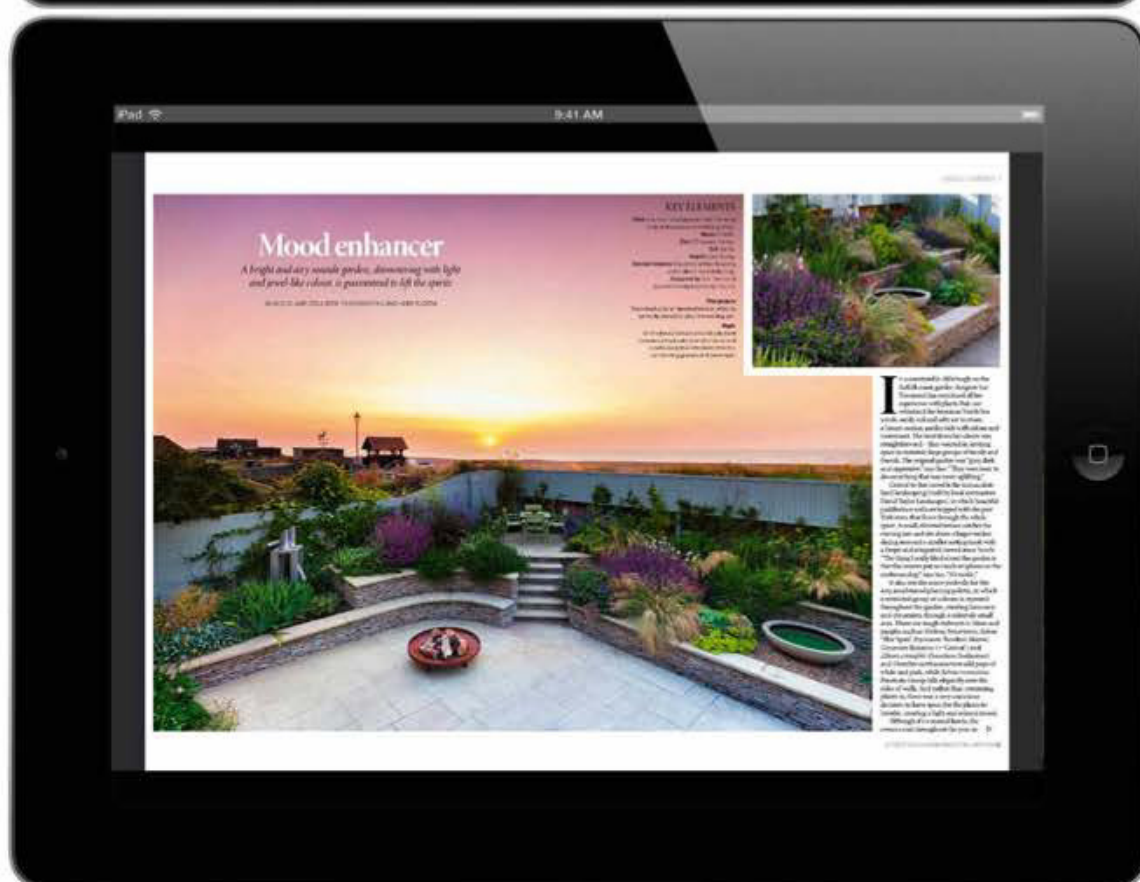
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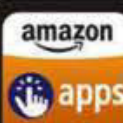
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A photograph of a lush garden with a gravel path. The garden is filled with various plants, including tall green grasses, purple-leafed plants, and clusters of red and yellow flowers. In the background, a modern house with a dark roof and large glass windows is visible under a clear blue sky.

# Singularly Dutch

The small Zeeland garden of Jopie Koens and Ton Alten has both a structure and planting style that is distinctively of its place

WORDS NOEL KINGSBURY PHOTOGRAPHS ROBERT MABIC





## IN BRIEF

**Name** De Doolman.

**What** Small garden that is home to a series of different borders offering a range of characters and colours.

**Where** The Netherlands.

**Size** 1,250 square metres.

**Soil** Clay over sand, so well-drained.

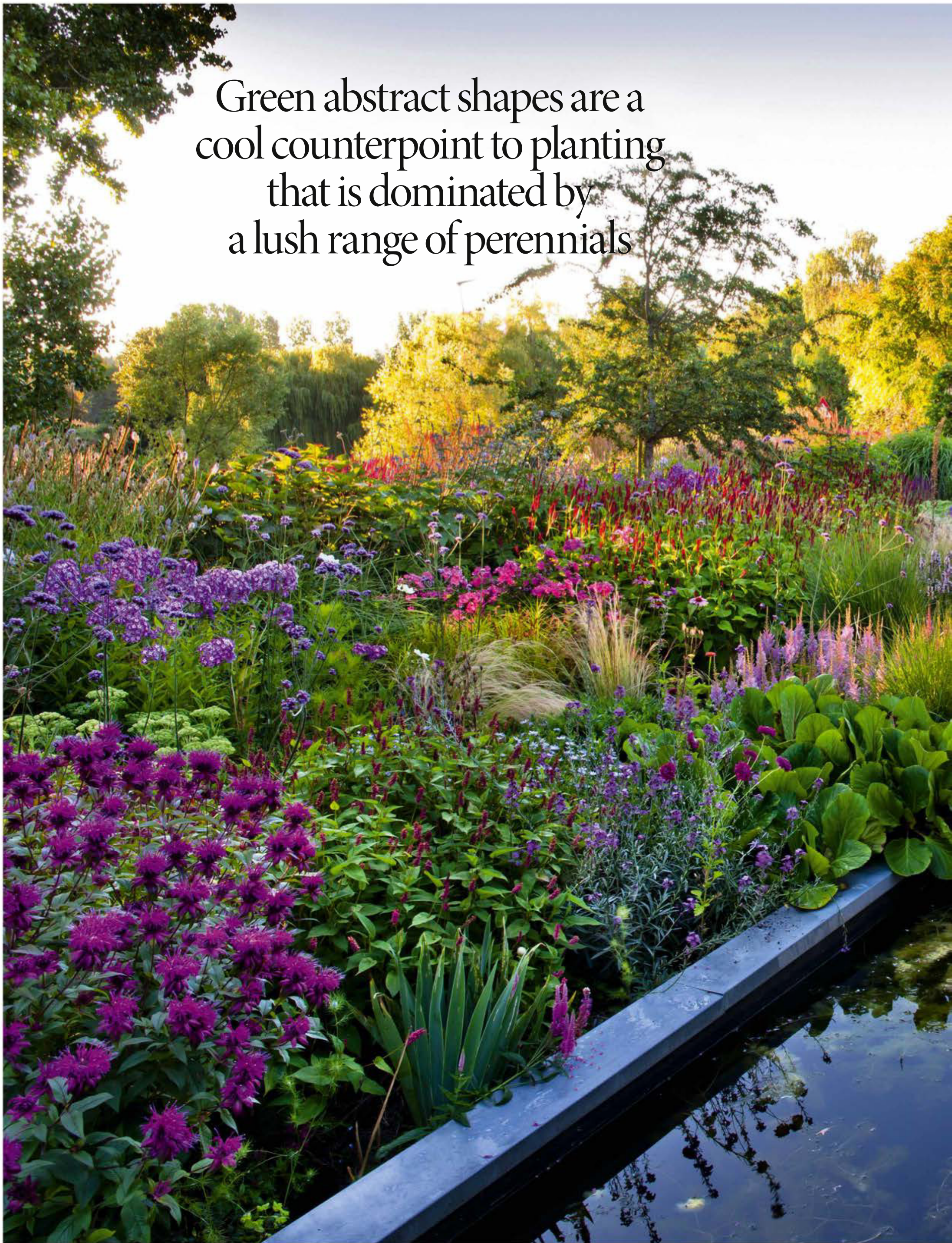
**Climate** Cool temperate with a maritime influence.

**Hardiness zone** USDA 9.

Leading out from the side of their modern house, Jopie and Ton have created a long Hot Border, with uplifting, fiery tones that include *Helenium* 'Sahin's Early' and *Crocasmia* 'Lucifer'. Dark purple is a good intensifier for warm colours, provided here by the large leaves of *Canna* 'Cleopatra' and purple foliage of *Cotinus coggygria* 'Royal Purple'.



Green abstract shapes are a cool counterpoint to planting that is dominated by a lush range of perennials







**T**he climates of the UK and the Netherlands are very similar, and a similar range of plants can be found in the gardens of these two most enthusiastic of gardening nations. Even so, were I to be parachuted into a random, unfamiliar garden and had to guess in which country I had landed, I'm pretty sure I would instantly know.

One garden that leaves little doubt is that of Jopie Koens and Ton Alten. This small garden, squeezed into a corner plot on one of Zeeland's peninsulas that reach out into the North Sea, has all the elements of a modern Dutch garden. Many of these lead back to one, incredibly influential, Dutch garden and landscape designer, who dominated the profession for much of the 20th century: Mien Ruys. Her vision was

architectural and modern – definitely post-Bauhaus – but she was also a lover of flowers and colour.

Jopie and Ton's garden is very plant focussed, colourful and relaxed, but two features stand out as being distinctly Mien Ruys: a long block of clipped box, rectangular shapes that all mesh together, and in another part of the garden, an array of box clipped into spheres of varying sizes. Both features read as sculptures – exercises in form in themselves, rather than as a structural framework as clipped box might be used in the UK.

These green abstract shapes are a cool counterpoint to planting that is overwhelmingly dominated by a lush and varied range of perennials, with grasses playing an increasingly important role as the summer progresses. Jopie also says that she likes to use seasonal flowers, such as dahlias, and annuals, including zinnias, cosmos and tagetes, that she

To continue turn to page 38 ►

The rectangular canal, which you cross to enter the house, creates a feeling of calm in the first area of this small garden, and provides a visual link to the sculptural groupings of box blocks and the pergola behind. To the left is the large Front Garden border, with a pink and purple theme that includes *Monarda* 'On Parade', *Bistorta amplexicaulis* and *Erysimum* 'Bowles's Mauve'. In spring this border is full of bulbs (mostly tulips and camassias) in a similar colour scheme.





**Above** A neat beech hedge separates the Hot Border from this cooler mix of planting dominated by the pink spikes of *Bistorta amplexicaulis* 'Rowden Gem' (a one-time *Persicaria* cultivar raised by John Carter in Devon). In front, *Phlox paniculata* 'Blue Paradise' stands out among the grasses that add movement to the border, including the steely blue *Poa labillardierei* and *Stipa calamagrostis*, with its feathery panicles and open habit.



**Below** The Hot Border extends out from Jopie and Ton's house, and is filled with hot colour from the red swords of *Crocsmia* 'Lucifer', yellow umbels of *Achillea filipendulina*, and orange sunflowers of *Helenium* 'Sahin's Early Flowerer'. At the front is an unnamed *Gaillardia aristata* hybrid, a short-lived perennial daisy with multi-coloured flowerheads that, according to Jopie, flowers all summer making it invaluable for long-season impact.





**Above** A *Koelreuteria paniculata* tree that Jopie's father grew from seed rises out of a bed of cloud-pruned box to create a focal point at the end of the Hot Border. Facing these sculptural box balls, rounded clumps of *Pennisetum alopecuroides* 'Hameln' create a rhythm along the path, punctuated by bursts of colour, including the yellow flowers of *Heliopsis helianthoides*.



**Below** The Cream and White Border is dominated by a vigorous, long-flowering, white phlox, its name long since forgotten, which Jopie inherited from her parents' garden. Behind, the feathery flowers of *Koenigia x fennica* 'Johanneswolke' (formerly a *Persicaria*) are very long lasting, although strangely of no interest to pollinators, alongside *Calamagrostis x acutiflora* 'Overdam', a subtly variegated relative of the much larger 'Karl Foerster'.





▷ grows from seed. “I put them in among the perennials to provide extra colour through the summer,” she says. And while she loves the green of spring, her favourite time of the year is August when the grasses are at their peak, especially as the month draws to its close and the colours begin to change. “At the beginning of the year everything is very low,” says Ton. “By the end some plants are two or three metres high; that’s something we find really exciting.”

The couple started the garden in 2012 but Jopie’s links to the garden go back much further. She was born here and lived here with her parents until her late teens. “My father was a metalworker and a hobby gardener who loved to grow many plants,” she says. The couple were understandably keen to maintain some of what her father had planted, including

some lime trees and a *Koelreuteria paniculata* he had grown from seed, and designed the garden around them. They also wanted views out on to the landscape, and Ton, who has taken the lead on the general garden layout, wanted the lines in the garden to connect their modern house to the straight lines that dominate the very flat surrounding landscape.

Given the geometry of much of the Dutch landscape, gardens either have to hide away or align themselves with the rows of trees, field boundaries and canals that order this rational country. “We started by planting the front garden diagonally,” says Ton. “So that you can look at and through the plants in different ways.”

While Ton has taken charge of the garden’s architecture, Jopie has selected most of the plants. In her design she was influenced by the famed double border of Madeleine ▷

Ton has used the same split grey basalt stone for the paths throughout the garden to create a sense of “unity and peace”. The planting has also added to this strong sense of visual unity by repeating certain plants throughout the borders. In the Hot Border Ton has used *Crocosmia* ‘Lucifer’ at intervals and used various grasses, most notably *Stipa calamagrostis*, in several of the borders.



A lush garden scene featuring a gravel path on the left, a dense bed of various flowers including red and yellow blooms, and tall grasses. In the background, a wooden fence and more greenery are visible. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

While Ton has taken  
charge of the garden's  
architecture, Jopie has  
selected most of the plants





Jopie likes to use seasonal flowers,  
such as dahlias, and annuals,  
including zinnias, cosmos and  
tagetes, that she grows from seed



▷ van Bennekom, one of a group of gardeners from Zeeland who became well known in the 1970s, at a time when Dutch gardening was at something of a low point. She also cites the influence of the Dutch designer Piet Oudolf. “But he gardens on a big scale, and we have only a small garden,” says Jopie. “We want flowers for as long as we can, from March to November; it’s difficult to have the number and range of plants to achieve this, and still have the strong structures that Piet has.”

Another inspiration has been the garden made by Nori and Sandra Pope at Hadspen in Somerset in the 1990s. For a brief time the work of this Canadian couple dominated all discussion of colour in the British garden world, and although Jopie never saw the garden in person, she has seen pictures of

it and read their books. Their spirit of bold experimentation has clearly led Jopie down some adventurous paths, such as her border in salmon tones.

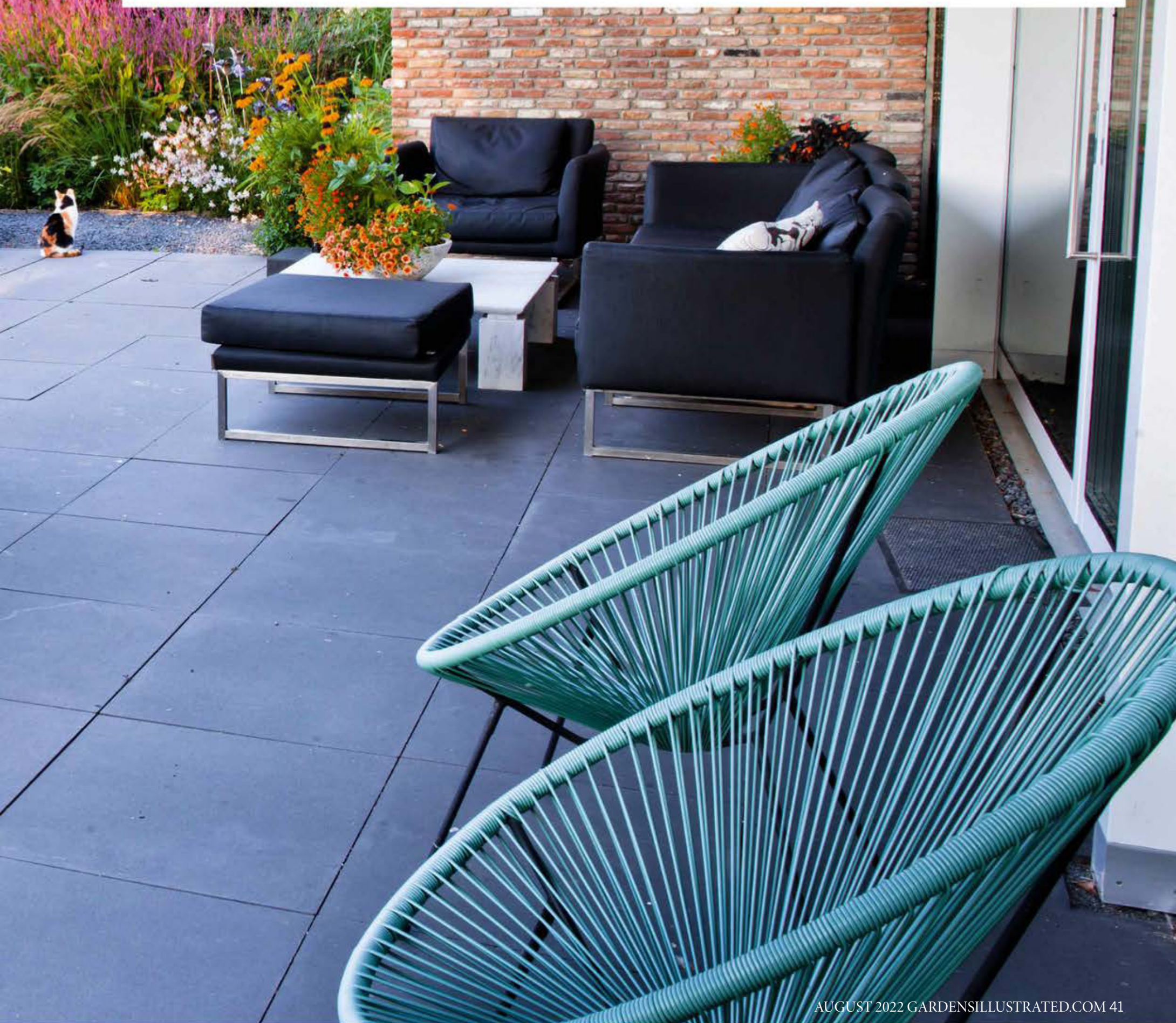
Planted exuberance often works best if the boundaries are clear. Firm lines with dense and diverse planting ensure that this is a garden that feels visually balanced and never has a dull moment, while we can be confident that it will continue to generate surprises for a long time to come. □

#### USEFUL INFORMATION

**Address** De Doolman, Oudekamerseweg 22, 4451 NC, Heinkenszand, the Netherlands. **Tel** +31 (0)6 22 03 09 22.

**Web** doolman-nl **Open** 27-28 August, and by appointment for groups of six or more. Admission €2.50.

The covered terrace offers an extension to Ton and Jopie’s modern house with outdoor sofas positioned to take advantage of the long, double Hot Border, which leads out from this side of the house. Planters on the terrace include a similar mix of bright colours to raise the spirits, including *Tagetes* ‘Starfire Mixed’. To the right, the pink flowers of *Bistorta amplexicaulis* ‘Rowden Gem’ stand out against the row of poplars, which create a sense of enclosure for the garden.







## *PLANT PROFILE*

**What** A large group of tropical shrubs grown for their colourful, bell-shaped or lantern-like flowers. Commonly known as Indian mallow, flowering maple and Chinese lanterns.

**Origins** From tropical and sub-tropical regions of Asia, Africa, Australia, North and South America.

**Season** Most flower during July to September.

**Size** From 30cm to 4m. Abutilons respond well to regular pruning and can be pruned to fit any space.

**Conditions** Although they will grow in full sun, abutilons are best in dappled shade in rich soil. Grown in pots they need regular watering and feeding.

**Hardiness** Relatively tender and will need overwintering in a greenhouse.

\*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society.  
†Hardiness ratings given where available.





***Abutilon megapotamicum***  
**'Big Bell'**

A cultivar of the trailing abutilon from Brazil and Chile. The long, arching stems can be tied into a trellis, pergola or wall, or they can be allowed to cascade over a pot. Flowers from midsummer through to autumn. 3m x 2m. RHS H2, USDA 9a-11<sup>+</sup>.

# ABUTILON

*With their delicate, papery flowers and trailing habit, these exotic plants from subtropical climes can add a touch of colour to dramatic, tropical foliage, such as gingers, cannas and bananas*

WORDS JOHN HOYLAND PHOTOGRAPHS TORIE CHUGG





***Abutilon* 'Citron'**

One of several hybrids introduced by National Collection holders Teri and Eric Turner before retiring from their nursery, T3 Plants. A floriferous plant blooming from late spring, the flowers are a wide bell shape with pale-lemon petals. 1m x 50cm. RHS H2, USDA 9a-11.





**Abutilon 'Snowfall'**

Of all the white-flowered abutilons, this is the one that probably has the most sparklingly clean, white flowers; their colour enhanced by their velvety bright-green leaves. Blooms from June to September. 80cm x 50cm. RHS H2, USDA 9a-11.



**Abutilon 'Julia'**

The semi-evergreen, bright-green foliage is a perfect background for the profusion of lemon-yellow bells. The shrub has an upright habit and is often grown as a single-stem standard. Flowers June to September. 1m x 70cm. RHS H2, USDA 9a-11.

There's something whimsical about *Abutilon* flowers. They're the sort of flowers that fill Victorian children's literature worn as pixie hats or as dangling lanterns to light the way of fairies. Perhaps book illustrators were inspired by seeing so many of them. The genus's heyday was during the Victorian and Edwardian eras when they were widely grown both in large private gardens and in public parks, used as accent plants or as the centrepieces of elaborate bedding schemes.

Abutilons are widespread in tropical and subtropical areas throughout America, Africa, Asia and Australia. Of the estimated 200 species very few have the decorative qualities that would appeal to gardeners. Several of the showiest hybrids come from a handful of South American species (some of which are now recognised in the related genus *Corynabutilon*). In the wild, they tend to be found growing in rich, moist soil under the dappled shade of tall trees.

Victorian gardeners categorised abutilons as 'stove plants' – those that needed to spend cold months in well-heated glasshouses. Time has shown that many are hardier than gardeners once believed and modern hybrids have been bred with a degree of hardiness. However, in most parts of Britain most abutilons will need to be overwintered in

glasshouses or grown in a conservatory. Only in coastal areas and in gardens that have a mild microclimate can abutilons be reliably left in the ground, and even then, be prepared for them to be lost in the occasional harsh winter that will still arrive.

Traditionally, they've been grown as conservatory or houseplants or treated as annual bedding plants. In the past few decades, they have found a role in tropical or exotic gardens, with the bold foliage of gingers, cannas and *Tetrapanax* providing a background for their colourful flowers. They also make a wonderful sight in terraced or hillside gardens where they are allowed to tumble and trail.

In general, their flowers are bell-shaped, a form accentuated by the lobes of the calyx. In most hybrids the bells are about 4cm wide, but some can be much larger. The glowing tangerine flowers of *A. 'Victor Reiter'*, for example, are 8cm wide. Those with longer, usually yellow, petals produce the distinctive Chinese lantern flowers from which the plants get one of their common names. The most widely grown of these is *A. megapotamicum* from Brazil, which

has flowers with bright-yellow petals and a dusky red calyx that dangle from leaf axils. This species is the source of many cultivars and hybrids. The stems grow quickly and left to its own devices will produce long, arching stems up to 2m long that trail along the ground. In cultivation it is either grown in a pot and allowed to cascade over the sides or the stems are tied in to a frame or trellis to suggest a

To continue turn to page 49 ▶

In the wild, abutilons  
tend to be found  
growing in rich, moist  
soil under the dappled  
shade of tall trees





***Abutilon* 'Cannington Carol'**

One of several abutilons, all with variegated foliage, that were developed at Cannington College, Somerset, in the 1970s. Its dark-green leaves are mottled with yellow and cream, some to such an extent that they are entirely cream coloured. 80cm x 50cm. AGM\*. RHS H2, USDA 9a-11.





***Abutilon megapotamicum*  
'Pink Charm'**

A modern cultivar with long, willowy stems that are easy to tie against a trellis or fence. The flowers dangle from the stems and are a subtle combination of dusky-pink calyces and soft-pink petals. 2m x 2m. RHS H2, USDA 9a-11.



***Abutilon* 'Souvenir de Bonn'**

The coral-coloured flowers are 6cm long, but it's the bold foliage that sets this cultivar apart. The large leaves resemble those of maples and have a wide margin of bright creamy-white. 1.5m x 1m. AGM. RHS H2, USDA 9a-11.

## How to grow *Abutilon*

- **How you grow your abutilons will largely depend on how mild your climate is or how sheltered the site.** In the UK, most abutilons are only reliably hardy in coastal regions or within the shelter and warmth of a city centre garden. If you can grow them in the garden, choose a bright position that has occasional shade.

- **Although abutilons will grow in very sunny situations,** they perform better in dappled shade. The leaves of some variegated cultivars can be scorched by too much sunlight. To produce so many flowers, a plant needs a lot of energy so incorporate plenty of manure or compost into the soil before planting and mulch every autumn with compost.

- **When growing abutilons in pots use a loam-based compost,** and during the growing season feed twice a month with

a balanced liquid fertiliser. Water regularly when the plant is growing and flowering but reduce this during the winter so that the soil is barely moist.

- **Abutilons that are grown outdoors are trouble free and not susceptible to any pests.** Those that are grown in the conservatory are prone to the usual range of conservatory pests, particularly scale insects and red spider mite. You can identify red spider mite from mottling on the leaves and, in heavy infestations, a fine, silky web that covers the foliage. Control it from early spring by introducing predatory mites.

- **Scale insects, which look like small blisters** on the underside of leaves, are less of a problem but they should be removed by hand as soon as you spot them. Ladybirds will eat them and at the same time deal with mealybugs, which

are a tiny white insect that sucks on the sap of the plants.

- **Left unpruned some abutilons will grow up to 4m tall** with most of the flowers out of sight at the top of the stems. To encourage more compact plants with more flowers, prune the plant hard from late April to early May, cutting stems to two or three buds from the ground. This will encourage new growth that should be covered in flowers by mid-August.

- **Plants that are grown in pots during the summer** and overwintered in a cool greenhouse can be cut back in late autumn and stored in a semi-dormant state until new growth appears in the spring. In a heated greenhouse or conservatory, prune as necessary, ideally in early spring, to control the size and shape of the plant.





***Abutilon* 'Kentish Belle'**

Bred at Hever Castle, Kent, in the 1950s, this is a long-flowering hybrid – from May to October – that has remained popular since its introduction. One of the hardiest of the family. 2.5m x 2.5m. AGM. RHS H3, USDA 7a-10b.



***Abutilon* 'Marion'**

The orange-red flowers are deep veined on the surface, which looks dramatic when backlit. Has a reputation for being one of the most long flowering, often in flower from May until the end of October. 2.1m x 1.5m. AGM. RHS H2, USDA 9a-11.



***Abutilon* 'Red Tiger'**

A vigorous hybrid with perhaps the most spectacular flowers of any *Abutilon*, with ruffled orange petals deeply veined in dark red. Flowers abundantly from June to October. 2m x 1.5m. RHS H3, USDA 7a-10b.



***Abutilon* 'Paddy's Nephew'**

The apricot flowers are topped by dusky-red calyxes and dangle from attractive, dark stems. Will survive outdoors in mild areas of the UK. 1.2m x 80cm. AGM. RHS H3, USDA 7a-10b.





**Abutilon 'Victorian Lady'**

Touted as the only double-flowered abutilon, although it is more that the petals are ruffled than the large (7cm-8cm wide) flowers have a double set of them. Popular in Europe, but can be hard to find in the UK. 80cm x 40cm. RHS H3, USDA 7a-10b.



**Abutilon 'Leila Jackson'**

Named for Teri and Eric Turner's daughter who developed many of their new introductions. Petals are an apricot colour with dark veining. When fully developed they furl outwards to create an open flower. 1.1m x 60cm. RHS H2, USDA 9a-11.

▷ climbing plant. I've also seen the stems attached to a hazel arch, so the flowers hang down and can be seen from below.

One of the best to grow against a wall is *Corynabutilon vitifolium* 'Veronica Tennant', which blooms in July and early August. The pale-lilac flowers, 8cm wide, are flat, saucer-shaped and reminiscent of a clematis. It has only recently been renamed as *Corynabutilon* and most nurseries continue to sell it as an *Abutilon*.

One common name is flowering maple, a reference to the shape of the leaves of some of the species. These large, maple-like leaves, which on some hybrids can be 10cm long, add to the attraction of *Abutilon*, particularly in planting schemes that aim to evoke a luxuriant, tropical atmosphere. Variegated foliage, popular in Victorian bedding schemes, is still a feature of many hybrids. A group of hybrids developed at Cannington College in Somerset all have leaves mottled and blotched with cream and yellow. *A. megapotamicum* 'Variegatum', which is still widely used in annual bedding gardens, has dark-green leaves flecked with bright yellow. This type of variegation is becoming less popular with gardeners, reminding many of us of sick or diseased foliage. More acceptable to modern tastes is clear, white variegation that borders the leaves, as on *A. 'Souvenir de Bonn'*.

In recent years plant breeders in Australia and the USA have turned their attention to *Abutilon* in the hope of creating hybrids

Many are hardier than gardeners once believed and modern hybrids have been bred with a degree of hardiness

that are truly hardy and which are easy to grow. *Abutilon* Bella Series is a seed strain that produces masses of pastel-coloured flowers on plants around 60cm tall. Even more compact, at around 30cm, is a range known as *A. Lucky Lantern*. Although all these dwarf forms are often smothered with flowers, they have none of the airiness or delicacy of larger hybrids. But for a small garden or patio they are ideal. □

John Hoyland is a plantsman and writer.

**Where to see and buy**

- **Burncoose Nurseries** Gwennap, Redruth, Cornwall TR16 6BJ. Tel 01209 860316, burncoose.co.uk
- **Cotswold Garden Flowers** Sands Lane, Badsey, Evesham, Worcestershire WR11 7EZ. Tel 01386 422829, cotswoldgardenflowers.co.uk
- **Paddock Plants** The Paddock, Upper Toothill Road, Rownhams, Southampton SO16 8AL. Tel 023 8073 9912, paddockplants.co.uk
- **Teri and Eric Turner\*** The Hop Kilns, Green Lane, Bromyard, Herefordshire HR7 4RZ. Nursery no longer open but email eric.teri@btinternet.com to arrange a visit to their collection.

\*National Collection holder.





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# SMALL GARDENS

*From a bright and airy coastal garden to an exotic, foliage-rich retreat, our five small gardens prove that confined spaces are no bar to creativity*



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Expert ideas on making the most of a limited space **page 72**



## KEY ELEMENTS

**What** Long, thin, city garden.

**Where** Northwest London.

**Size** 50m x 5.5m, with Stefano concentrating his design on the area nearest the house.

**Soil** Good, moisture retentive yet free-draining loam.

**Aspect** South-facing.

**Special features** Atmospheric, 'jungle' planting with a pebble seat and focal arch.

**Designed by** Stefano Marinaz Landscape Architecture ([stefanomarinaz.com](http://stefanomarinaz.com)).

This long, thin garden feels fabulously lush, with repeat plantings of *Astrantia major* 'Large White' and *Geranium Rozanne* (= 'Gerwat') lining the serpentine path. Tree ferns and a tall lilac (*Syringa vulgaris*) create an effective mid-height layer.

# Tales of the unexpected

*Lush planting and a meandering path give this city garden by Stefano Marinaz a magical, otherworldly feel*

WORDS NATASHA GOODFELLOW PHOTOGRAPHS ALISTER THORPE



**Left**

The existing, statuesque false acacia (*Robinia pseudoacacia*) was retained and makes a stunning focal point from the kitchen and terrace, also serving to shade the house from the sun. The wood-patterned porcelain tiles complement the wooden flooring within while echoing the sleek design of the interior.

**Below**

The pots, from Atelier Vierkant, were the starting point for the design, their colour blending perfectly with the terrace tiles and the painted wall, along which *Trachelospermum jasminoides* is trained. In this one, blue *Geranium Rozanne* (= 'Gerwat') mixes with old inflorescences of *Salvia x sylvestris* 'Serenade', which when in flower provides a contrasting violet.

**Bottom**

The original boundary fence was retained on one side of the garden. On the other, where it is more visible, it has been replaced with a horizontally slatted design covered in evergreen *Trachelospermum jasminoides*, whose scented, white flowers are a delight in mid to late summer.

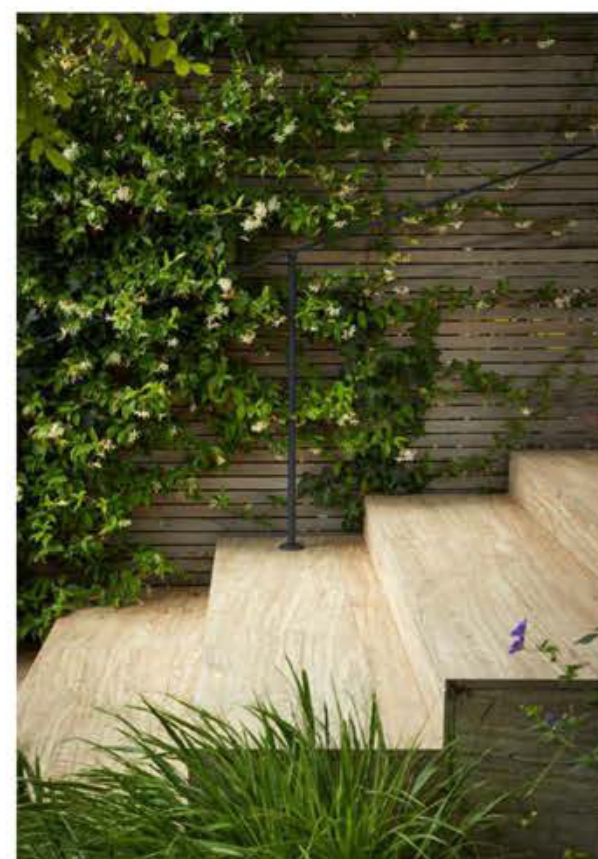


When garden designer Stefano Marinaz first visited this Victorian terraced home in northwest London, he was not expecting its back garden to offer a trip into the unknown. Having gained access through the house, which was being extended and refurbished at the time, he was met with a rather sorry space where intertwining paths demarcated narrow planting beds edged in dying box. So far, so unremarkable. "But the further I went, the more overgrown it became – it was like a forest," he says. "I had to push through brambles and overgrown shrubs and, because the garden is so long and thin, you couldn't see the end. It felt like a journey into the unknown."

It is this feeling – of a secret, magical, compelling space – that Stefano tried to preserve as he transformed the garden for

the clients, whose only request was that it should allow their son to play football. To do this, Stefano used the elongated shape of the plot to his advantage, dividing it to create the necessary lawn while focusing his efforts on the area nearest the house.

Key to creating the atmosphere he wanted is the planting, which is lush and generous, and dissected by a meandering gravel path of fluctuating width. "Having something irregular and organic seemed to fit the space better," says Stefano. Evergreen shrubs such as *Pittosporum tenuifolium* 'Golf Ball' and *Camellia japonica* 'Alba Plena' mingle with others, including *Hydrangea quercifolia* Snow Queen (= 'Flemmygea') and the white-flowering *Trachelospermum jasminoides*, for seasonal interest. Eddying around these are repeat plantings of perennials – *Geranium Rozanne* (= 'Gerwat'), *Astrantia major* 'Large White' and *Kirengeshoma palmata* among them. ▶





# The crucial sense of immersion and enclosure stems chiefly from the canopy layer, so trees were retained wherever possible

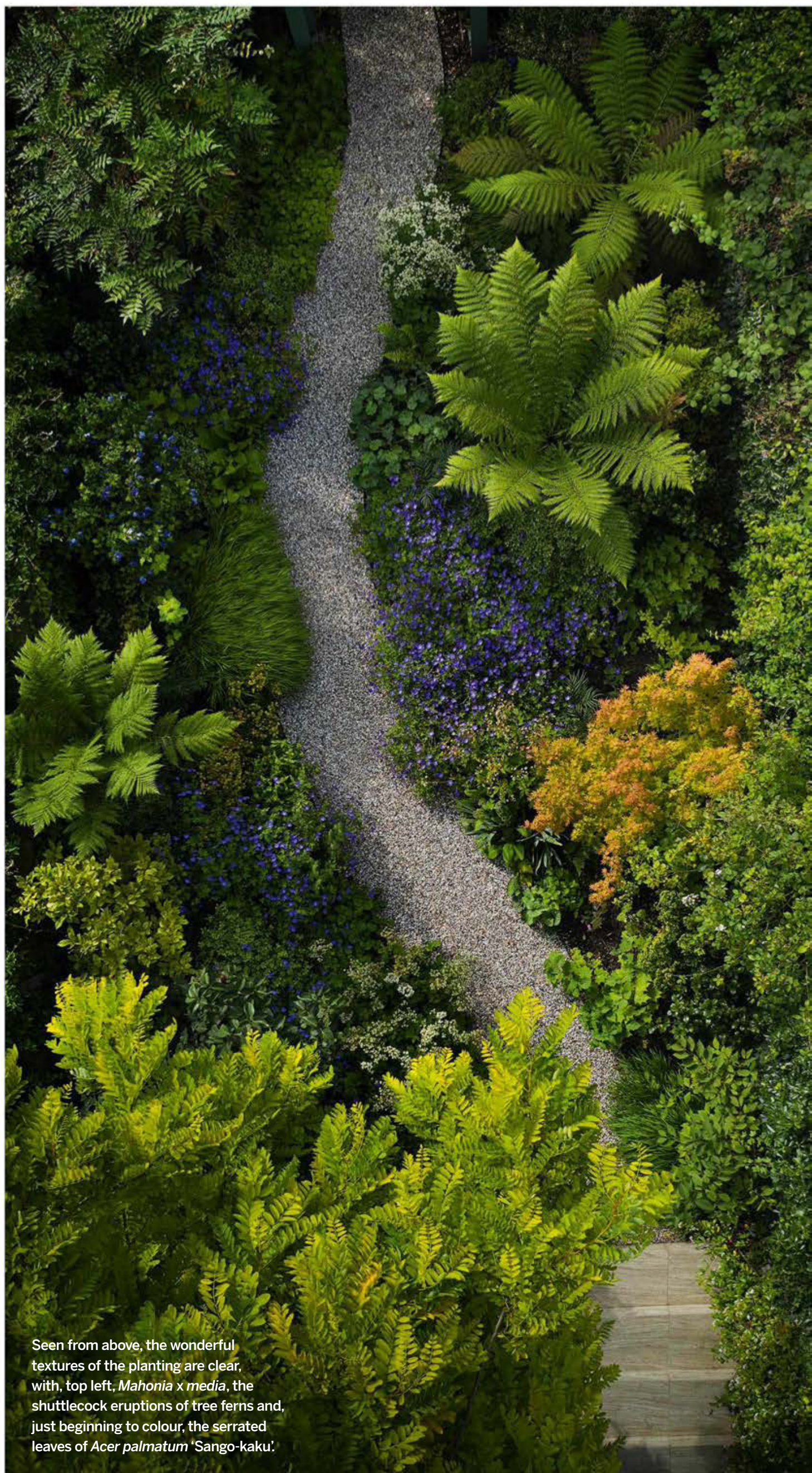
▷ Additional impact comes from six handsome tree ferns, some of them over 3m tall, whose spreading fronds conjure a sense of jungles and lost worlds; a number of tall, glossy-leaved *Fatsia japonica*; and two *Acer palmatum* 'Sango-kaku', whose branches turn bright red in autumn and winter. "They look like little fires burning," says Stefano.

The crucial sense of immersion and enclosure stems chiefly from the canopy layer, so Stefano retained as many trees as he could – three birches, a lilac and, most importantly, a glorious *Robinia pseudoacacia* close to the house. "The leaves are already light green and when the sun shines on them, the whole tree seems to glow with energy," he says.

A rose clambering over an archway to the rear of the space was also preserved, although the arch itself was replaced by a sharp, modern design in powder-coated steel. Coloured green, it acts as a highly effective focal point, drawing the eye along the pathway to the end of this part of the garden and creating a sense of mystery as to where it goes next as it slips, unseen, behind the pair offset yew hedges that screen the lawned area.

Before engaging Stefano, the client had already chosen the pots she wanted to use, a collection of light, sandy-coloured planters from Belgian clay specialist Atelier Vierkant, and it was these – and the design of the new kitchen – that set the tone for the hard landscaping. "I could have used sandstone," says Stefano, "but I felt that these wood-patterned tiles were more contemporary, and part of the same design language as the refurbishment."

The same company also makes smooth, pebble-like seats, one of which now nestles in the borders – revealing and disguising itself as the planting waxes and wanes with the seasons. "To me, it looks like a dinosaur's egg," says Stefano. It does, and one that feels entirely at home in this otherworldly space. □



Seen from above, the wonderful textures of the planting are clear, with, top left, *Mahonia x media*, the shuttlecock eruptions of tree ferns and, just beginning to colour, the serrated leaves of *Acer palmatum* 'Sango-kaku'.



**Left**

The metal archway acts both as a focal point from the house and as a gateway to the rest of the garden, which includes a large lawn and a garden studio and trampoline. The pebble seat is partly concealed by Japanese forest grass (*Hakonechloa macra*) and *Kirengeshoma palmata*.

**Below left**

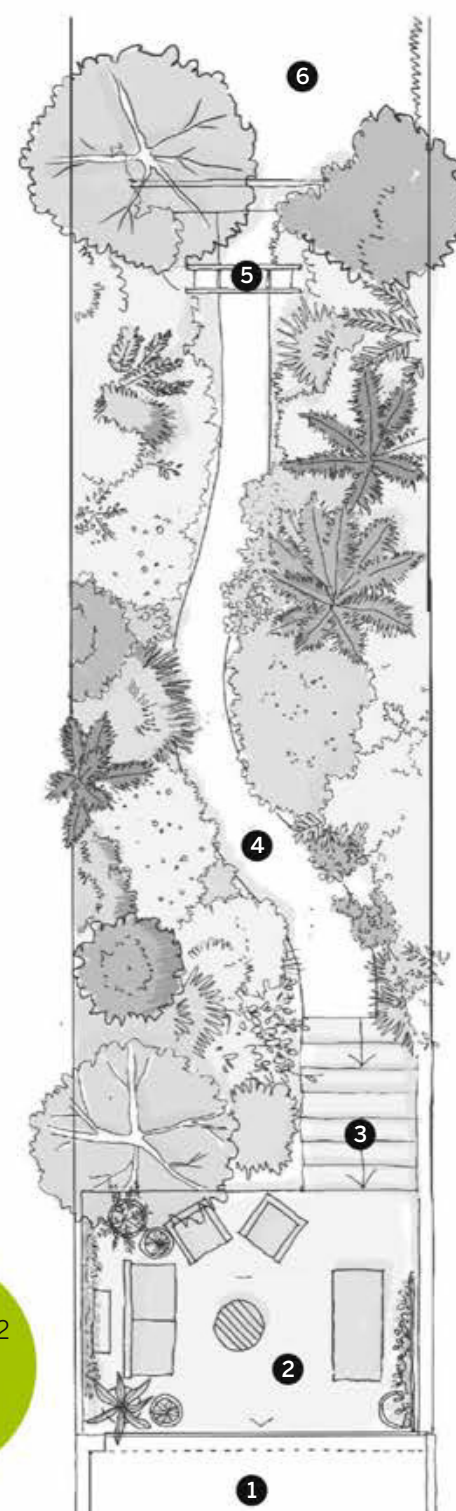
*Astrantia major* 'Large White', which grows to around 90cm tall, is one of the key perennials in this garden. Stefano chose it for its clump-forming habit, its pure white petals and its stature, meaning it really stands out among the planting.

**Below right**

There was an existing clump of three hibiscus in the garden before Stefano started work. Feeling that their exotic looks were in keeping with the jungle look of his design, Stefano has relocated the plants to thread the colour through the space.

## GARDEN PLAN

- |           |                  |
|-----------|------------------|
| 1 House   | 4 Pathway        |
| 2 Terrace | 5 Arch           |
| 3 Steps   | 6 Further garden |



Turn to page 72  
for Stefano's  
design tips





# Cornered by nature

*A previously tricky, small, corner plot of this Grade II-listed Georgian house is now a lush, multi-sensory space for dining and entertaining guests, while also welcoming vital pollinators*

WORDS SONYA PATEL ELLIS PHOTOGRAPHS RACHEL WARNE



## KEY ELEMENTS

**What** Small, urban garden adjoining a Grade II-listed Georgian house.

**Where** London.

**Size** 35 square metres (a corner plot).

**Soil** London clay, improved and regularly topped up with mulch.

**Aspect** East-facing.

**Special features** A dining area and pond.

**Designed by** Miria Harris, landscape designer (miriaharris.com).

There's a beauty in not knowing what's around the corner – or in this case, what to expect from the three-cornered plot of land attached to the back of the beautiful, three-storey Georgian townhouse, owned by art-collecting couple Gareth and Dave, and transformed by landscape designer Miria Harris into a relaxing urban oasis.

Just seconds from a recently greened-up yet still busy Highbury Corner, through the cool, period-featured corridor to the corner-scape kitchen, the big reveal instantly rewards. With a finely tuned eye for design and curation, and a keen ear for listening to her clients and to the rhythm of nature, Miria has created an impressively multi-fold garden. Within the sanctuary of its boundary walls lies a series of beautifully planted, connecting spaces, each of which leads to an interior dining area beyond. Al fresco entertaining is at the heart of the plan.

“With four entries to the garden from the house and two levels to navigate, the original garden was a mismatch of badly designed steps and poorly laid hard landscaping causing drainage problems and trip hazards,” says Miria. Now, a jauntily angled Californian basketweave of Belgian Vande Moortel bricks knits the whole lower courtyard together, with reclaimed York-stone flags above.

The new, mostly evergreen and successively sensory planting plan, incorporating a wonderfully gnarled *Cotinus coggygia* ‘Royal Purple’ and a mature *Wisteria sinensis*, is similarly cohesive. Ferns – including two of Miria’s favourites, *Polystichum polyblepharum* and

Lush evergreen and perennial planting softens the upper terrace of York flagstones and creates a frame for the pond. Anchoring the corner is a gnarled *Cotinus coggygia* ‘Royal Purple’, its light-catching maroon foliage sets the tone for a succession of flowers in shades of purple, blue and dark red.



# You may think shady courtyard gardens are limited when it comes to flowers, but this garden is full of them

▷ *Dryopteris filix-mas* – were a must, with the arching blades of *Hakonechloa macra* providing the perfect textural foil. Miria also ensured a long succession of flowering interest, using *Trachelospermum jasminoides* on the bespoke, anthracite-grey, square-profile trellis to bring a heady, summer scent from June into September.

“You may think that shady courtyard gardens are limited when it comes to flowers, but this garden is full of them,” says Miria. The tapestry includes sultry *Rosa* Night Owl (= ‘Wekpurosot’), *Leycesteria formosa* ‘Purple Rain’, with its flamboyant flowers and purple-tinged, crinkly leaves, crimson *Persicaria amplexicaulis* ‘Blackfield’, reddish-purple *Astrantia* ‘Hadspen Blood’, violet-blue *Geranium* ‘Brookside’, and the deep-purple *Penstemon* ‘Raven’, which, alongside red-purple *Fuchsia magellanica*, is particularly attractive to bees: “I make a conscious effort to weave wildlife-friendly plants into my designs,” says Miria.

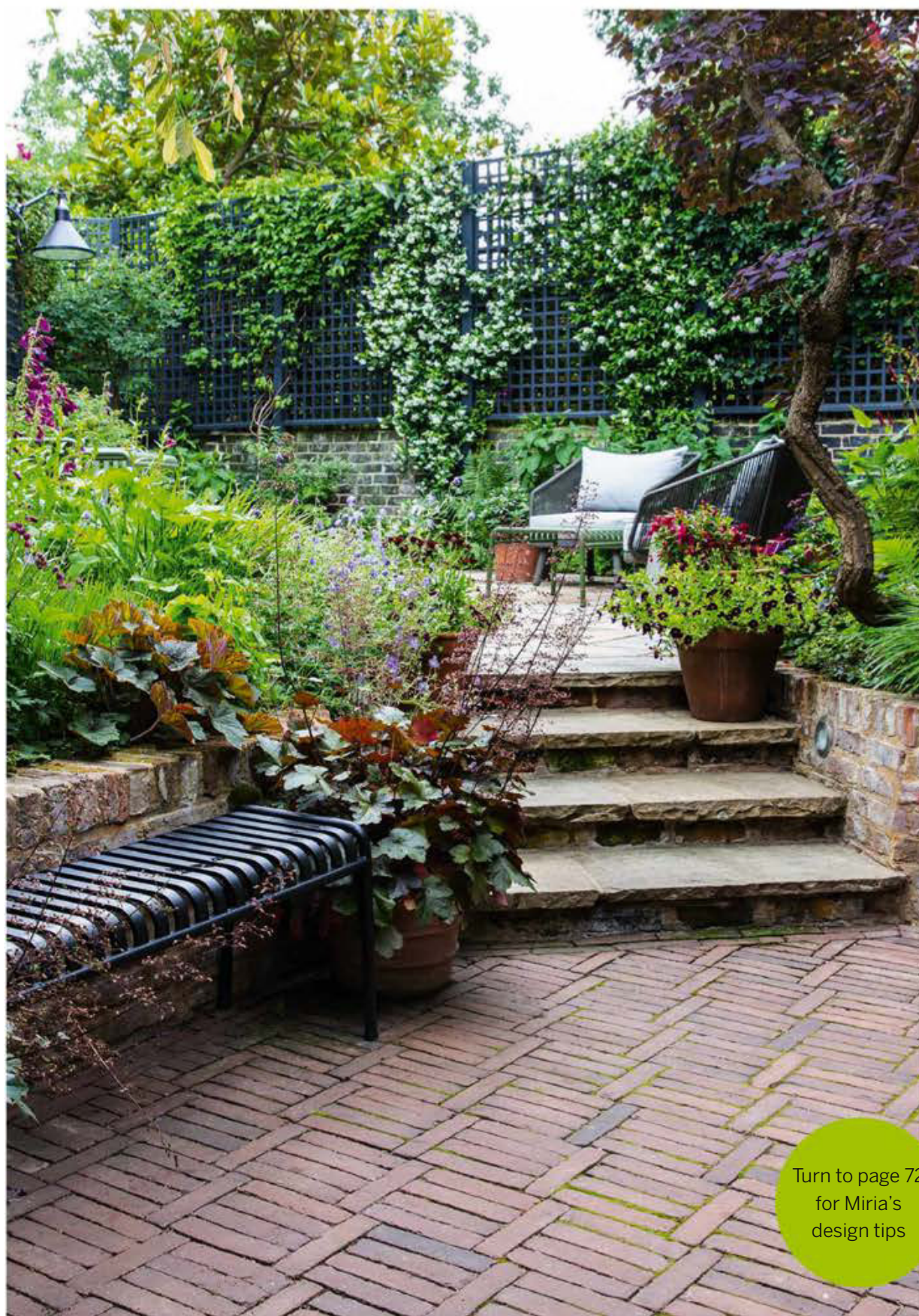
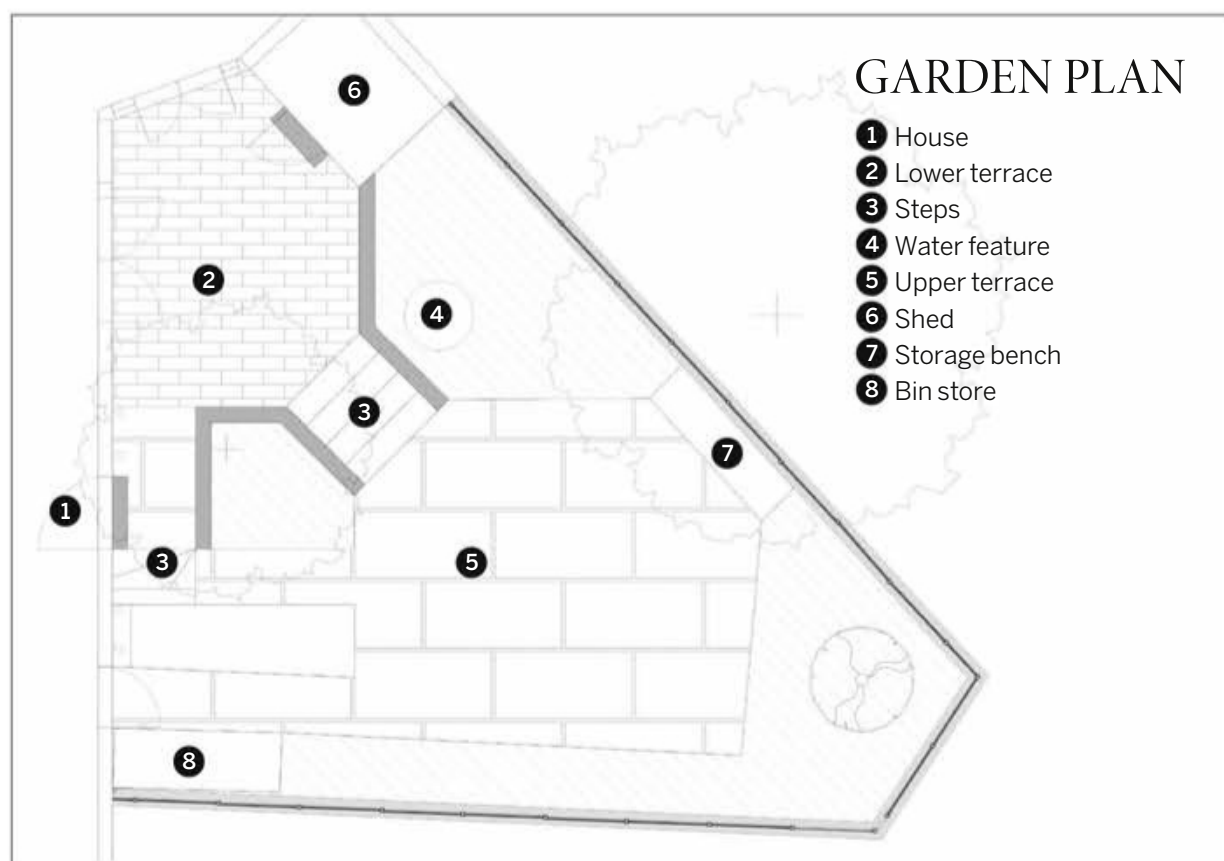
This elegant palette is mirrored in the bronze-maroon foliage of *Heuchera* ‘Walnut’, a plant that’s repeated through the scheme to light up shadier spots, its tall panicles of frothy, white flowers on stiff stems giving structure to the winter garden. It is joined by autumn showstopper, Chinese Virginia creeper (*Parthenocissus henryana*) and a multi-stemmed *Acer griseum* holding its own in an awkward corner.

The final touch of calm comes via a small pond, sunk into a raised bed and housing ornamental fish saved from the old garden. All in all, this is a low-maintenance, relaxing gem of a space but one where the owners can get creative by adding bulbs and annuals to a host of handpicked pots. As Miria muses “the ripple effect of greening up the city, corner by corner, is also powerful” – and that’s something on which we can probably all agree. □



The al fresco dining area is central to the design, furnished with Ronan & Erwan Bouroullec Palissade table and chairs, and a Lampe Gras exterior anglepoise lamp. Shrubs and perennials, including *Leycesteria formosa* ‘Purple Rain’, *Fuchsia* ‘Riccartonii’ and *Geranium* ‘Brookside’, envelope the setting with colour and scent.





Turn to page 72  
for Miria's  
design tips



#### Left

The lower terrace is defined by a beautifully laid basketweave of bricks, with the red-brown foliage of *Heuchera* 'Walnut' leading the gaze up into the green oasis above. The bespoke, anthracite trellis is the perfect foil for a sequence of pollinator-friendly, flowering climbers, including *Trachelospermum jasminoides* and a climbing hydrangea.

#### Above top

The clients love ferns and Miria was happy to include favourites *Polystichum polyblepharum* and *Dryopteris filix-mas*. The arching blades of Japanese forest grass (*Hakonechloa macra*) are the perfect textural foil, contrasting with a softly palmated heuchera and lacy-leaved geranium.

#### Above

"In small gardens, all plants have to work hard," says Miria. "*Penstemon* 'Raven' is one such grafter, its deep-purple, white-throated, bell-shaped blooms flower from May to October. The bees are rather fond of its nectar and pollen-rich blooms too." The height of this plant also lends architectural structure.



# Mood enhancer

*A bright and airy seaside garden, shimmering with light and jewel-like colour, is guaranteed to lift the spirits*

WORDS CLARE COULSON PHOTOGRAPHS RICHARD BLOOM





## KEY ELEMENTS

**What** A sunken coastal garden with terraced beds and spacious entertaining areas.

**Where** Suffolk.

**Size** 173 square metres.

**Soil** Sandy.

**Aspect** East-facing.

**Special features** Beautiful hard landscaping and resilient coastal planting.

**Designed by** Sue Townsend  
(suetownsendgardendesign.co.uk).

**This picture**

Steps lead up to an elevated terrace, which is perfectly placed to catch the evening sun.

**Right**

On the lowest terrace an Urbis Lily Bowl provides a focal point from the house and creates beautiful reflections from the surrounding grasses and perennials.



In a courtyard in Aldeburgh on the Suffolk coast, garden designer Sue Townsend has combined all her experience with plants that can withstand the ferocious North Sea winds, sandy soil and salty air to create a breezy, sunken garden rich with colour and movement. The brief from her clients was straightforward – they wanted an inviting space to entertain large groups of family and friends. The original garden was “grey, dark and oppressive,” says Sue. “They were keen to do something that was more uplifting.”

Central to that mood is the immaculate hard landscaping (built by local contractors David Taylor Landscapes) in which beautiful paddlestone walls are topped with the pale York stone that flows through the whole space. A small, elevated terrace catches the evening sun and sits above a larger sunken dining area and a smaller seating nook with a firepit and integrated curved stone bench. “The thing I really liked about this garden is that the owners put so much emphasis on the craftsmanship,” says Sue. “It’s tactile.”

It also sets the scene perfectly for the airy, jewel-toned planting palette, in which a restricted group of colours is repeated throughout the garden, creating harmony and dynamism through a relatively small area. There are tough stalwarts in blues and purples such as *Verbena bonariensis*, *Salvia* ‘Blue Spire’, *Erysimum* ‘Bowles’s Mauve’, *Geranium* Rozanne (= ‘Gerwat’) and *Allium cristophii*. *Oenothera lindheimeri* and *Dianthus carthusianorum* add pops of white and pink, while *Salvia rosmarinus* Prostrata Group falls elegantly over the sides of walls. And rather than cramming plants in, there was a very conscious decision to leave space for the plants to breathe, creating a light and relaxed mood.

Although it’s a second home, the owners visit throughout the year so





# Rather than cramming plants in, there was a very conscious decision to leave space for the plants to breathe

▷ the garden has to hold its own year round. Dramatic lighting helps to do this – spotlights highlight areas of planting as well as the owners' sculptures, creating beautiful shadows and reflections. There are also evergreens threaded through the design, including *Pittosporum tenuifolium* 'Golf Ball', *Elaeagnus x submacrophylla*, *Phormium* 'Bronze Baby', *Cistus x argenteus* 'Silver Pink' and *Bupleurum fruticosum*, with *Trachelospermum jasminoides* climbing up the walls. *Stipa tenuissima* and the shimmering *Miscanthus nepalensis* both add to the winter interest, and bring movement as well as beautiful reflections in the small water feature that sits centre stage on the lowest terrace. "When there's the slightest breeze it all just wafts," adds Sue.

One of the few gambles is the Coyote willow – *Salix exigua* – which adds some height and is one of the few willows that can survive on sandy soil. The project was carried out in spring 2020 and the garden has since thrived, the only loss a hebe that succumbed to a cold snap. "I do experiment with the plants to a certain degree, but I also respect the fact that the sea and the salt are here. I've developed a palette that I know works well," says Sue, who has done a garden on the seafront at nearby Thorpeness and is currently working on another coastal garden further along the coast at Dunwich. "It's really thinking about leaf types – they've got to be waxy. Rosemary and euphorbias cope really well." A favourite is *Euphorbia seguieriana*, which adds a zingy jolt of colour and, unusually for the species, flowers in summer.

Visitors to this popular seaside town inevitably flock to the beach, but the clever sunken layout and double wall and fence mean that the owners retain their privacy. A concealed gate meanwhile allows access right on to the beach for a quick dip or to watch one of the east coast's spectacular sunrises. □



Despite the location right on the beach, Sue has designed a private space with fencing painted to match the house and terraced planting that creates a sense of enclosure and privacy.





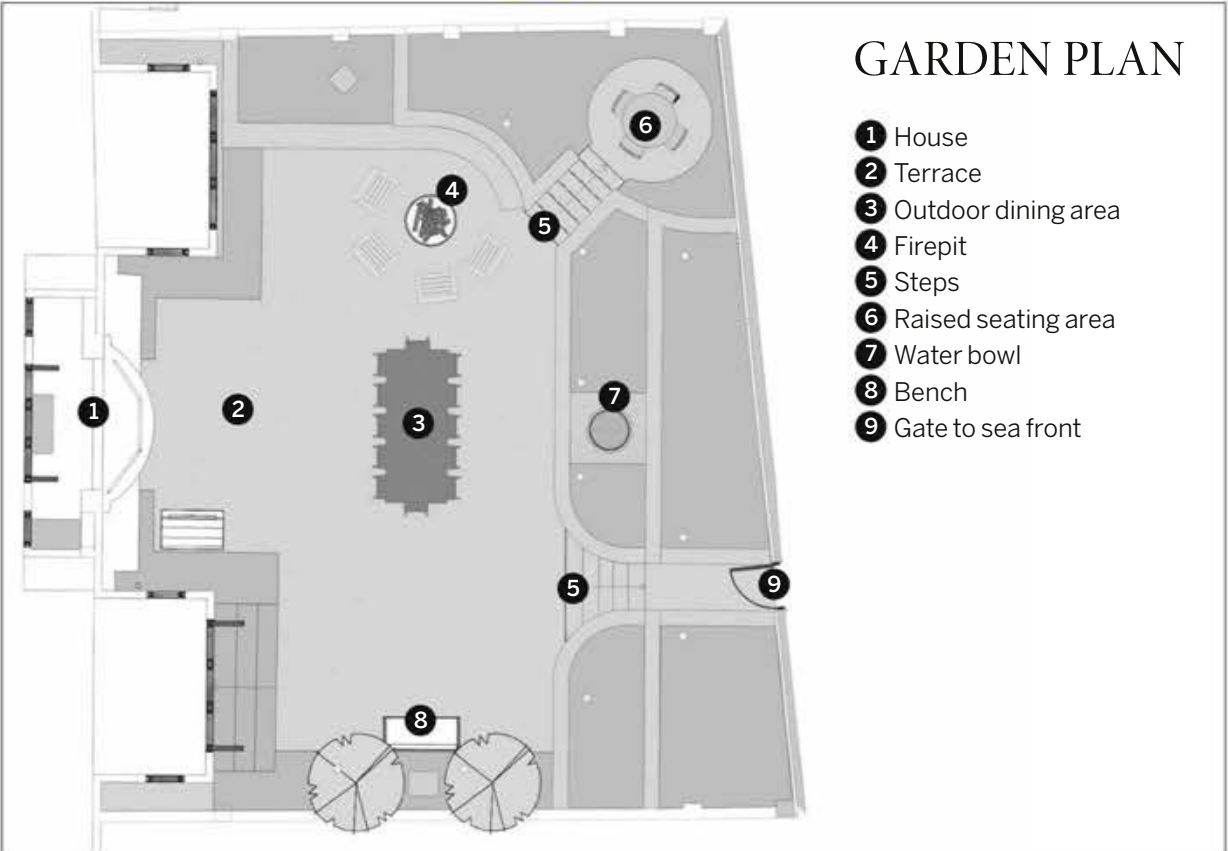
**Left**  
In high summer pops of colour from lavender, *Dianthus carthusianorum* and *Erysimum* 'Bowles's Mauve' contrast with *Stipa tenuissima* and evergreens including pittosporum.

**Bottom left**  
Plants are encouraged to tumble gracefully over the immaculate York stone-topped paddlestone walls. Here *Erysimum* 'Bowles's Mauve' and *Ballota pseudodictamnus* are perfect partners.

**Below**  
Airy spires of *Oenothera lindheimeri* add a fresh note among jewel-toned perennials.



Turn to page 72  
for Sue's  
design tips





# Deceptively simple

*Designer Sheila Jack has transformed this small city garden from artificial lawned-anonymity to a charming woodland-inspired plot that's a peaceful social space for a family with grown-up children*

WORDS KATE JACOBS PHOTOGRAPHS LISA LINDER



## KEY ELEMENTS

**What** Small residential garden.

**Where** London.

**Size** A tapering rectangle of around 70 square metres.

**Soil** Compacted London clay and rubble, with imported topsoil in planted areas.

**Aspect** West-facing.

**Special features** Woodland planting and firepit area.

**Designed by** Sheila Jack ([sheilajack.com](http://sheilajack.com)).

### Above

Bands of York stone allow water to permeate into the strips of gravel and planting and create a visual link with the horizontal batten trellis. This has been painted in a soft blue-black, which helps to emphasise the largely green palette that includes *Selinum wallichianum*, *Hakonechloa macra* and *Erigeron karvinskianus*.

With dappled sunlight falling on lush ferns and mounds of grasses tousled by the breeze, this city garden is a welcome refuge from the hot and dusty summer streets beyond. The tranquil simplicity of this small plot belies the huge transformation that has been worked here by designer Sheila Jack. When her photographer friend Lisa Linder moved to this Victorian coach house in Hampstead, 20 years ago, Lisa and husband Neil needed somewhere for their two young sons to burn off energy and so the whole plot was hidden under artificial grass. In the intervening years, the London clay compacted under many thousands of football sessions, so that by the time the boys had grown up, water was regularly pooling on one side of the garden and threatening to damage the boundary wall.

Coming to Lisa's rescue in 2018, the project began with the excavation of huge trenches for drainage pipes, as well as land anchors, that now hold the wall in place. With little horticultural knowledge but a strong sense of aesthetics, Lisa wanted somewhere lush and green, with space for her still sports-mad sons to play table tennis. Sheila steered her away from the idea of a lawn towards a buff-coloured gravel. "Grass was always going to be a struggle in this shady space. These Cotswold pebbles are smooth enough to walk on barefoot and bring light into what was a dark spot."

The same soft, buff tone flows seamlessly from the gravel to the terrace of York stone by the house, enhancing the sense of space. The paving slabs have been arranged in irregularly spaced stripes, interplanted with low-growing *Soleirolia soleirolii*. "This design helps with water permeability and provides



**Left**

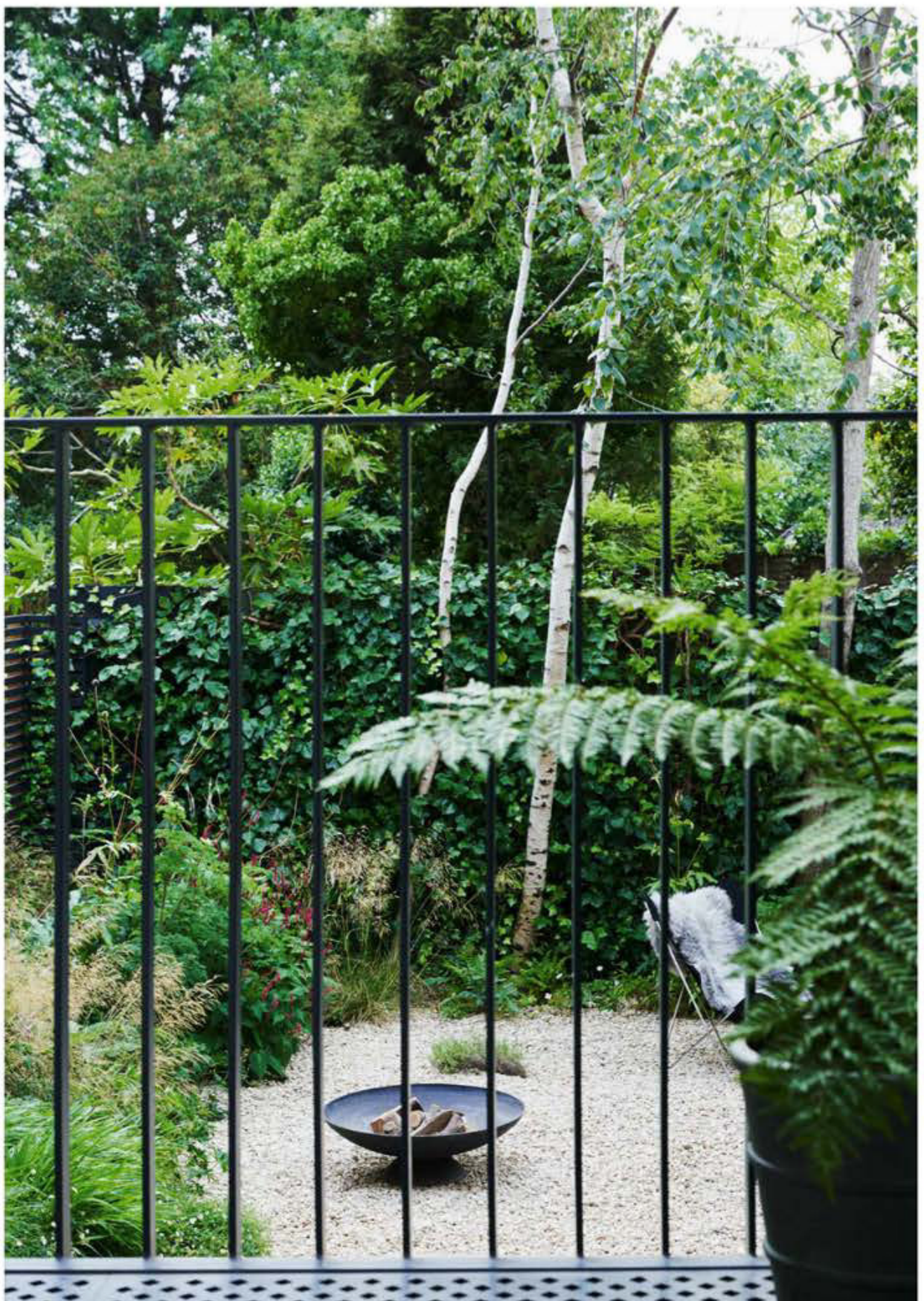
The captivating flowers of *Tricyrtis formosana* 'Dark Beauty', which Sheila selected "for its intensely plum-coloured buds and exotic-looking white flowerheads, heavily spotted in inky purple."

**Below left**

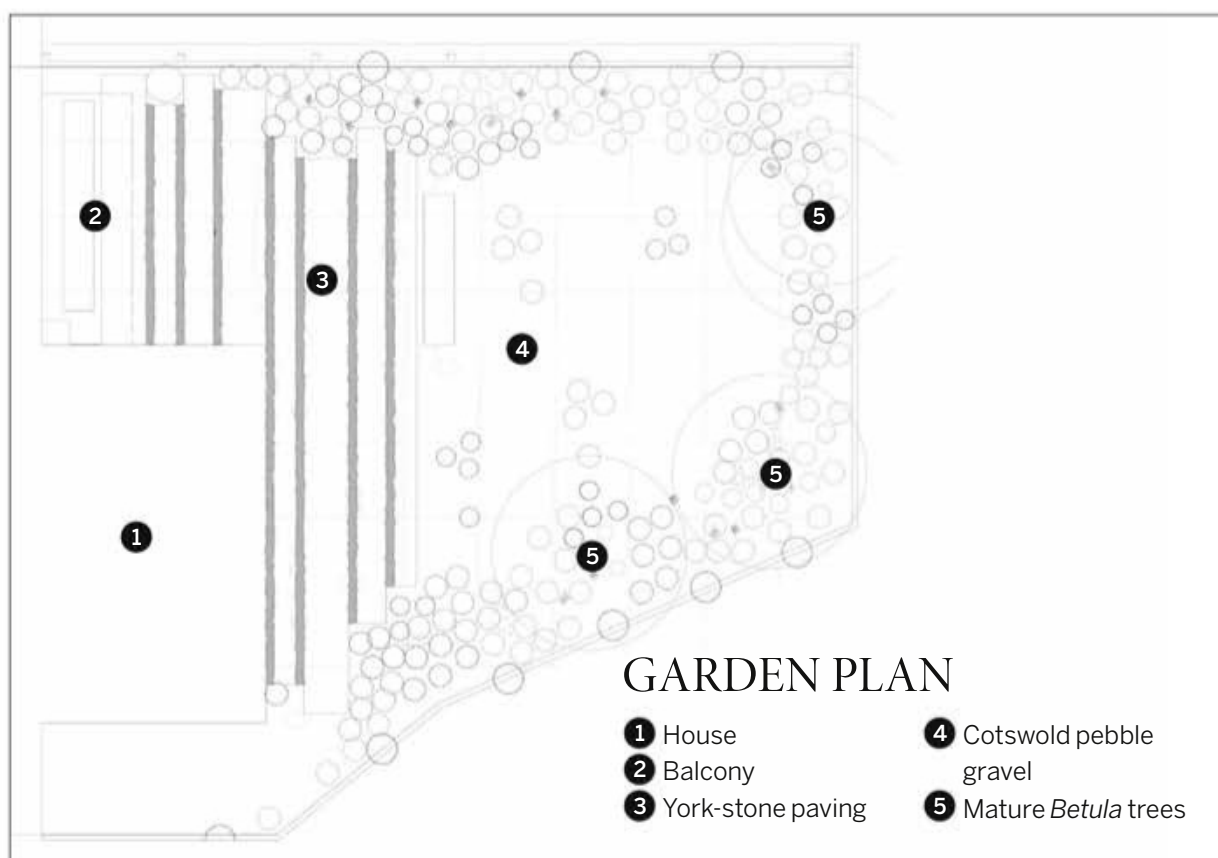
The airy flower spikes of *Bistorta amplexicaulis* 'Alba' emerge from billowing masses of cloud-like *Deschampsia cespitosa* 'Goldtau', bringing a wild element to the planting scheme.

**Below**

The new upper-ground floor balcony replaces the old decked area with its steep, stepped access down to the garden, providing a viewpoint that encourages you to pause and contemplate the space, where once it was just a precarious route down. A potted *Dicksonia antarctica* forges a link with the planting below.







#### Top right

This versatile, portable Skagerak tray table is ideal for a small garden. Sheila planted a little *Viola hederacea* in the vintage French pot from Petersham Nurseries.

#### Right

Reliable perennial *Selinum wallichianum*, chosen for its broad, white umbels and dainty, fern-like foliage, adds height and interest against the dark trellis.

#### Far right

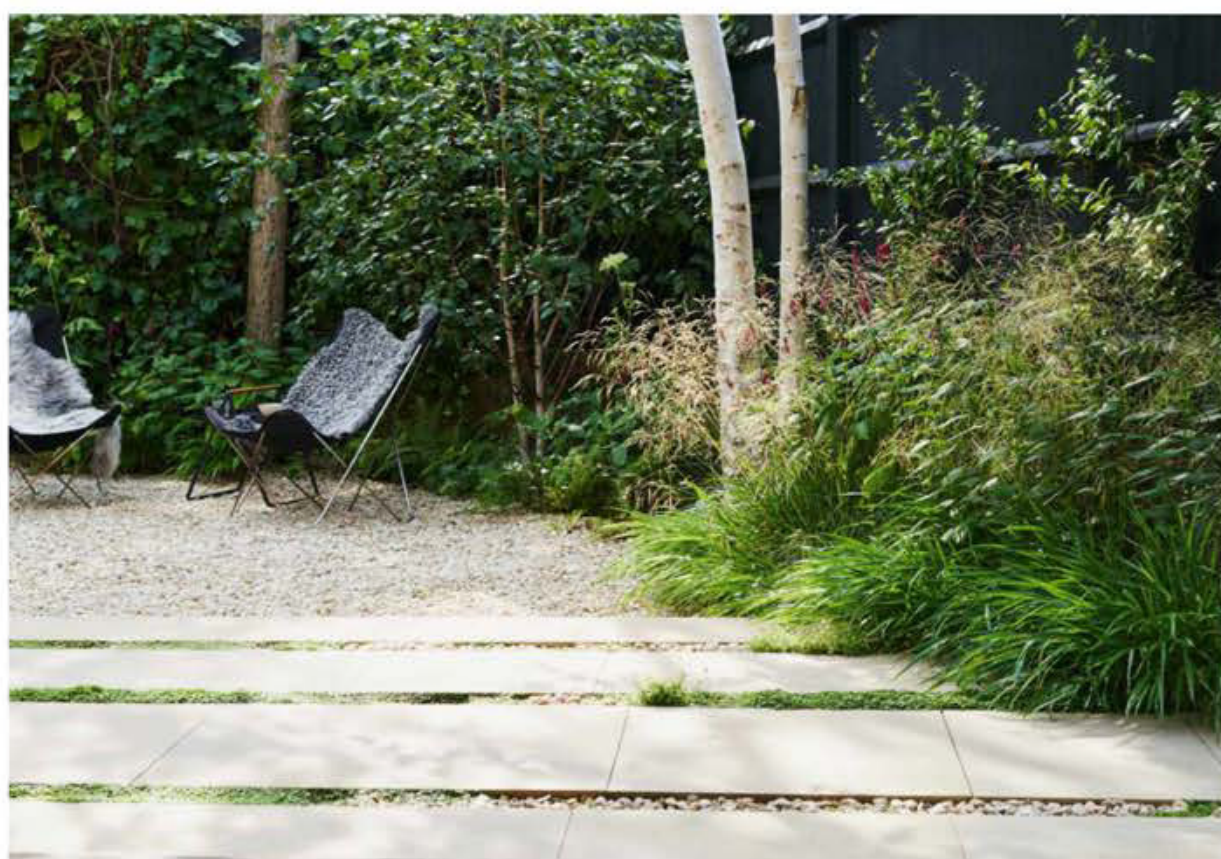
The cast iron fire bowl, from Crocus, provides a focal point and is popular with the owners' sons, who like to gather around it with their friends in the evening.

#### Below

*Bistorta amplexicaulis* Taurus (= 'Blotau') is used for its vigorous habit in partial shade. "It adds vertical interest and dashes of dark red through to autumn."

#### Below right

These portable 'Butterfly' chairs can be moved around for sun or shade. The Cotswold pebble gravel was an affordable, water-permeable, hard-landscaping material. Bold bands of York stone are interplanted with *Thymus praecox* and *Soleirolia soleirolii*.





## The idea was to plant a pretty but reasonably self-sustaining scheme of plants suited to the partially shaded conditions

▷ a strong graphic counterbalance to the loose, organic feel of the gravel area.”

To the rear of the garden, the boundary fence is blurred by a curtain of mature *Hedera helix* and fronted by an existing *Betula pendula* and acacia, along with another double-trunked *Betula pendula* near the house. Between the birches is a multi-stemmed *Betula utilis* subsp. *jacquemontii*, added to lighten a gloomy corner and distract the eye from the awkwardly obtuse angle.

These trees informed Sheila's decision to create a woodland feel here. “I jokingly refer to it as the ‘glamour woodland’; an excuse to plant a pretty but reasonably self-sustaining scheme of plants suited to the partially shaded conditions.” Key plants include shaggy tufts of forest-dwelling *Hakonechloa macra* and ferns *Polystichum setiferum* and *Blechnum spicant*. The planting is loose and naturalistic, with hummocks and mounds gently defining the central open space, as though plants have self-seeded there, and the planted areas improved with topsoil, as the clay and rubble on the site was unsuitable as a growing medium. Sheila and Lisa wanted the garden to be largely green and the perennials were chosen for their muted charms. “I wanted subtle, delicate flowerheads on wiry stems, and a variety of interesting flower shapes, but nothing too brash.” So, floating among waves of grasses are the fluffy, crimson spikes of *Bistorta amplexicaulis* Taurus (= ‘Blotau’) and the airy umbellifers of *Selinum wallichianum*, each creating seasonal interest without stealing the show.

The family all love the new garden, and the couple's sons spend just as much time out here as ever. Now it's established, the garden needs little in the way of watering or maintenance, although the plants do find themselves carefully manicured by Lisa, who approaches them with her photographer's eye for visual perfection. □

The York stone references the colour of the Victorian house's pointing, and the colour blends seamlessly with the soft buff of the Cotswold pebble gravel from Allgreen. Lisa had the old cedar decking recycled into a generously proportioned garden sofa, upholstered with Sunbrella outdoor fabric.

Turn to page 72  
for Sheila's  
design tips





# Urban jungle

*In this Islington garden, designer Declan Buckley has used lush, jungle-style planting to remind his clients of their childhoods in Kerala*

WORDS NATASHA GOODFELLOW PHOTOGRAPHS RACHEL WARNE

## KEY ELEMENTS

**What** Urban residential garden.

**Where** Islington, London.

**Size** 10m x 14m.

**Soil** Improved London clay with better-than-average drainage.

**Aspect** West-facing.

**Special features** Layered, sub-tropical style planting with a range of textured foliage.

**Designed by** Declan Buckley, (buckleydesignassociates.com).

**This image**

Declan has used layering to great effect with *Soleirolia soleirolii* as groundcover, a mid-layer of *Pittosporum tobira* 'Nanum' and *Chamaerops humilis*, along with shrubs and small trees including *Euphorbia mellifera*.

**Right**

The planting provides a verdant, mainly evergreen, backdrop to the house, in full view of the kitchen.





Sometimes, things just fall into place. That was certainly the case in this project, where the clients, introduced to garden designer Declan Buckley by their architect, happened to have bought a house just across the road from Declan's home. They got in touch, intending to visit another of Declan's projects, but when that fell through, they met at Declan's house instead and the rest, as they say, is history. "My garden is like the temperate house at Kew, but without a roof," says Declan. "It's rather overgrown now but they loved the lushness of it, and when they realised that they could grow hardy versions of bananas that they were familiar with from growing up in Kerala, they were super excited."

The clients' new garden, when Declan first saw it, was nothing more than a patch of grass backing on to a line of *Cupressocyparis x leylandii* in the neighbouring plot – in this case a welcome feature, since the house refurbishment featured a lot of glazing and the trees afforded some privacy. The extensive use of glass also means that the garden is the first thing you see when entering the house, so Declan has layered his planting from the ground up, creating a lush, dense understorey and using taller plants for scale and seclusion. Most are evergreen to ensure year-round interest, all are hardy for minimal maintenance, and together they conjure that Rousseau-esque feel Declan loves. "For a low-maintenance garden, it's about as exotic looking as you can get in the UK," he says.

Texture, rather than colour, is the star here, with contrasts of foliage and scale used to great effect. Tiny, smooth-leaved *Soleirolia soleirolii* is used as an edging plant, scrambling out across the porcelain steps and pebble pathway and softening the underlying geometry. At the other end of the scale are the huge, palmate leaves of *Tetrapanax* ▷



## Texture rather than colour is the star here, with contrasts of foliage and scale used to great effect

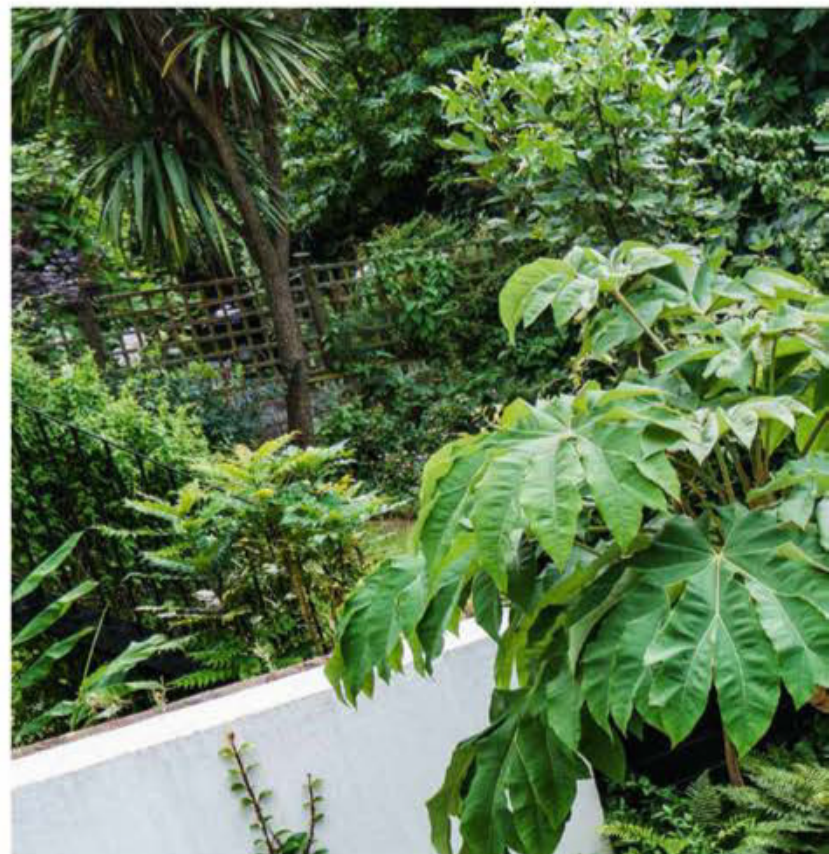
▷ *papyrifer* 'Rex', repeat planted throughout the space, and a fast-growing *Paulownia* tree, positioned so that its lilac flowers in spring shine out against the leylandii.

Elsewhere, the chocolatey hue of feathery *Albizia julibrissin* 'Summer Chocolate' is echoed in the bespoke steel water feature and in the quite extraordinary plant that is *Pseudopanax crassifolius* – a tall, almost leafless trunk with slender, drooping leaves. *Schefflera* and *Fatsia polycarpa* (more delicate than *F. japonica*) add height without taking the light, and a row of *Phyllostachys bisetii* has been planted at the rear as a precautionary measure, "just in case the leylandii are ever cut down," says Declan.

More familiar plants have been used too. Declan has clipped *Pittosporum tobira* 'Nanum' into "boulders" throughout the space, providing a smooth, cushiony backdrop to the firework-like explosions of the leaves of *Chamaerops humilis*. Conversely, *Euphorbia mellifera*, usually a large dome, has been trained into a striking, multi-stemmed shrub, underplanted with the glossy leaves of *Zantedeschia*.

Though the overwhelming impression is one of green, there are subtle changes throughout the year, with the *Zantedeschia* and *Libertia chilensis* flowering in April and May, followed by a succession of scarlet crocosmia, blue agapanthus and deep-purple *Salvia* 'Amistad'. *Vinca difformis*, the intermediate periwinkle, spills its starry flowers over the low walls around the terrace for much of the year.

The garden was only planted in 2018 but already it looks mature. Both Declan and his clients are thrilled with the growth rate and the way the textures and forms have grown together. Declan is also relieved. "The clients are my neighbours after all," he smiles. "It would have been awful if they weren't happy." □



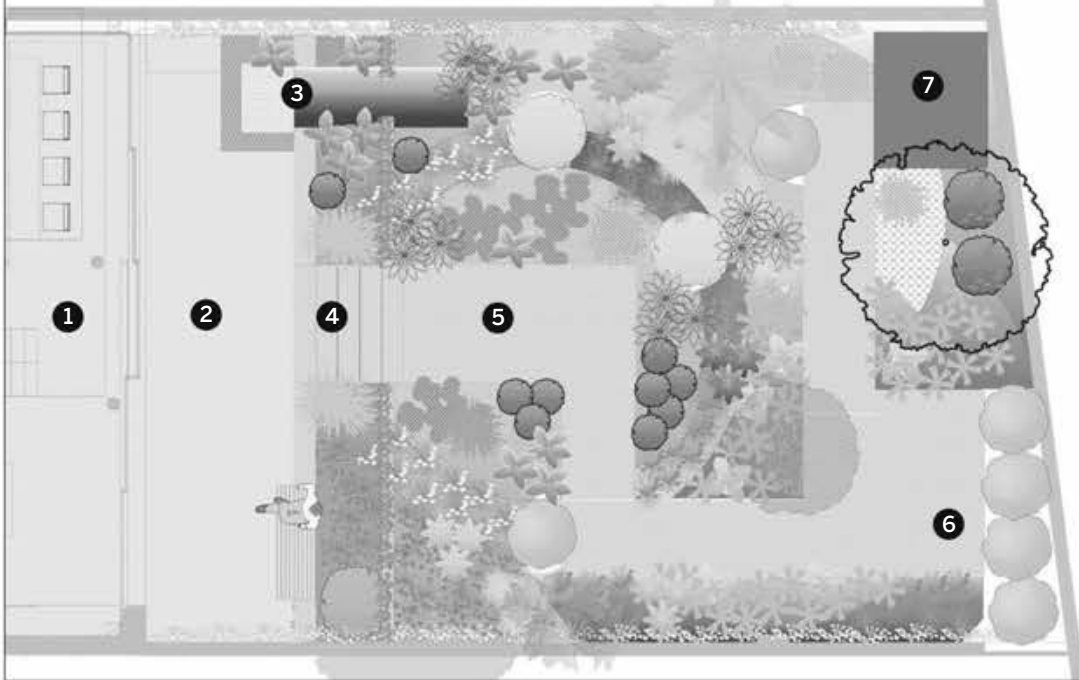
Turn to page 72  
for Declan's  
design tips





### GARDEN PLAN

- 1 House
- 2 Terrace
- 3 Bespoke water feature
- 4 Porcelain steps
- 5 Pebble pathway
- 6 Seating area
- 7 Store



**Top left**  
Growing to over 1m tall and with deep-purple flowers, *Salvia* 'Amistad' is one of the few pops of colour in the garden – others come from crocosmia, agapanthus and *Vinca difformis*, the intermediate periwinkle.

**Left**  
The steel water feature is fringed with *Zantedeschia aethiopica*, young tree ferns (*Dicksonia antarctica*) yet to develop trunks, and a *Hydrangea seemanii*, an evergreen climber. A clump of evergreen bamboo (*Phyllostachys bissetii*) adds to the tropical feel.

**Above**  
The density of the planting on the upper level is interrupted only by the sinuous gravel path. The contrast of leaf shapes works particularly well: the huge palmate leaves of *Tetrapanax papyrifer* 'Rex' against the feathery *Albizia julibrissin* 'Summer Chocolate' and the tall, slender *Pseudopanax crassifolius* with its drooping foliage. To the rear, the fresh green leaves of *Musa basjoo* (which resembles the edible bananas found in warmer climes) can just be seen, along with a foxglove tree (*Paulownia tomentosa*), which bears lilac flowers in spring.



# Designers' tips for small gardens

*It's a fine art creating a garden in a tight space. We ask the designers of the small gardens featured in this issue to share their approaches to working with diminutive plots. The square metres may be minimal, but the ideas and techniques that can be employed are many*



## Consistency is key



Stefano Marinaz favours simplicity and continuity, with fuss-free hard landscaping, organic-shaped paths and planting to blur boundaries.

**In small spaces, the textures, finishes and colours of the hard landscaping should knit together.** For the project in northwest London, the light-coloured gravel path is a visual continuation of the tiles on the terrace and these blend well with the pots. You can adapt the use of elements such as pots to continue the scheme and give them another function, as we did, transforming an Atelier Vierkant pot into a firepit and coffee table. **We love using paths that meander through the planting.** The width of the path should vary, allowing for different angles and views of the garden. An asymmetric layout provides more viewpoints, and naturalistic planting brings the mind closer to nature. **It is important to green up the garden perimeters** so that it's hard to tell where the property ends. I soften boundaries with common yew, or scented climbers such as *Holboellia latifolia* (shady walls) and *Trachelospermum jasminoides* (sunny walls). Smaller gardens are often shadier, particularly in cities, so I use perennials that stay fairly compact (within 70-80cm in height) to reduce the chance of them leaning towards the light. *Pittosporum tobira* 'Nanum', *Sarcococca confusa* and *Daphne* work well in many situations.

## Love thy neighbour



Miria Harris borrows from the surroundings to make a small space feel bigger and evokes the planting of the wider landscape beyond the garden.

**Talking to neighbours and getting them on board with any plans is key to a successful small garden design.** Privacy is something a lot of people crave, but that doesn't mean small gardens should be mean. Sharing plants (a climber from next door, for instance) or splitting costs can go a long way to improving the experience for all. **A garden that is connected to its environs always feels bigger.** When designing a small garden, I often think about *shakkei*, the Asian design concept of 'borrowed scenery'. The views of neighbouring gardens are important, as are the different views of planting and structures within the garden and how these will look all year round. **Climbing plants are perfect for greening up a small space.** *Trachelospermum jasminoides* is a good choice, or the creamy-yellow *T. asiaticum*. Another favourite plant for small gardens is hellebore and I often use the claret-coloured, double-flowered hybrid 'Pretty Ellen Red'. Its slightly tropical-looking, evergreen foliage can dance between different aesthetics and stylistic bents, and it grows well in pots. Fennel is also a plant I use often. The giant bronze type acts as a great diaphanous plant screen, filtering or teasing a view to another space in the garden.





## Built-in features



Sue Townsend uses terraces and steps to amplify small spaces, with introduced features to unify the design and focal points to draw the eye.

**To maximise space for entertaining in the Aldeburgh coastal garden, I created terraced retaining walls** from paddle stones topped with sawn York stone. These bring height, texture and plenty of space for layers of planting that enclose the terrace and form the backdrop to the garden.

**Features can be introduced into a design to make the most of the space.** In the Aldeburgh garden an integrated curved bench set into the wall allows the owners to gather round a firepit surrounded by the smell of rosemary and lavender. It's important to have unity of materials so the same paddle stone theme was continued in the steps leading to a small seating area.

**Focal points are key.** In this garden an Urbis water bowl in the lowest bed can be enjoyed from the house and sculptures are positioned in the planting.

**Small gardens are often in full view, so select plants carefully and for all seasons.**

In this coastal garden there is an emphasis on evergreens and plants that can survive the salt-laden air. My go-to plants for small spaces include *Oenothera lindheimeri* 'Whirling Butterflies', *Dryopteris affinis* 'Cristata The King' and *Salvia rosmarinus* Prostrata Group.



## A restrained palette



Sheila Jack limits the variety of both plants and landscaping materials, and maximises space through vertical planting and layering.

**I like to use a restricted palette of natural materials linked to the surrounding architecture.** In Lisa's garden, we used simple but good materials including buff York stone, Cotswold gravel and a painted cedar trellis combined with a simple palette of plants suited to the conditions. Editing the planting to six to ten varieties in a tight space makes for a more successful scheme.

**Make use of neighbouring trees** to extend views into and out of the garden. In this case, we used the tree canopy to enhance the woodland feel and sense of place.

**Painting boundaries dark colours will make them disappear.** The dark grey used in Lisa's garden works wonderfully with the fresh green of the *Hedera helix* 'Green Ripple' and *Trachelospermum jasminoides* and helps to lose boundary in shadow.

**Layers of transparent planting or multi-stemmed trees with a light canopy**, such as *Amelanchier x lamarckii*, will filter views into and out of a space. Don't be afraid to bring the planting close to the house, and be generous with planting for maximum impact. Upright perennials, such as *Cephalaria gigantea* and *Valeriana officinalis*, and grasses such as *Calamagrostis brachytricha* and *Deschampsia cespitosa* work well.



## Layers of evergreen



Declan Buckley focuses on year-round interest and thinks big in a small space, using tall and large-leaved plants to create a jungly feel.

**When it comes to the plants in a small garden, I start by thinking about what the planting will look like in winter** and always include a generous percentage of evergreen plants. It's good to focus on foliage shapes and textures, sprinkling through with seasonal colour.

**Go for a single idea and run with it.** For the Islington project, we took advantage of the London microclimate and used hardy and half-hardy exotic style planting, including *Tetrapanax papyrifer*, *Trachycarpus wagnerianus*, *Schefflera taiwaniana* and *Schefflera alpina* to create a space that transports the owners to warmer climes. We often use water in our projects, like we did here, as the sound of water will immediately create a sense of place in a small garden or courtyard.

**Don't be afraid of taller plants** – remember the sky is your ceiling – and use perennial species in generous groups. For height in the Islington garden we used *Pseudopanax crassifolius* and *Trochodendron aralioides* (specifically the variety from Taiwan available from Crûg Farm Plants, which is glossier, airier and lighter – and faster growing – than the other form from Japan).



# Colouring in the city

In recent years the city of Sheffield has been given a green makeover thanks to a groundbreaking environmental strategy

WORDS JODIE JONES PHOTOGRAPHS RICHARD BLOOM

## IN BRIEF

**What** City development scheme opening up areas of planting and new public green spaces.

**Where** Sheffield city centre.

**Size** 1.3km of new footpaths and cycleways.

**Soil** A mix of local recycled material to create low-fertility and be free draining.

**Climate** Prone to flooding.

**Hardiness zone** USDA 8.

City roads were rerouted to allow for new areas of planting, footpaths and cycleways. The planting beds have been constructed to cope with water runoff from the streets with plants that capture pollutants, including plastic particles from car tyres.









Clumps of *Calamagrostis x acutiflora* 'Karl Foerster' create upright punctuation for a diverse multi-layered planting. Even though Nigel has included non natives, such as *Sisyrinchium striatum* and *Eremurus x isabellinus* 'Cleopatra', this provides a long flowering that generates incredible value for pollinators and other invertebrates.

## These planting schemes are positively gardenesque in their richness, diversity and impact

**T**he urban planting in Sheffield city centre is astonishing. Everywhere you look there are beautiful examples of just how much can be achieved with a robust palette of well-chosen plants, and nowhere is this more apparent than in the Castlegate area of the city where the succinctly named Grey to Green project is helping to transform rundown streets into a flower-filled haven for humans and wildlife.

Until 2008 this area was filled with four lanes of traffic, but following the building of a new outer ring road, a new scheme with just two lanes and much reduced vehicle use (with associated dedicated cycle ways and pedestrian routes) was possible. The liberated space is now filled with a connected sequence of planted beds, rain gardens and bioswales, creating the UK's longest 'green street', and largest retrofit urban sustainable drainage scheme.

The project was the brainchild of visionary Simon Ogden, who was then head of city centre regeneration. He developed the idea that a revolutionary landscape scheme could be part of the city's response to the catastrophic Sheffield floods of 2007, when

the River Don, which runs through the city, burst its banks, causing two deaths and an estimated £1 billion worth of damage.

Simon approached Nigel Dunnett, evangelical exponent of naturalistic urban planting schemes and professor of planting design at the University of Sheffield, for help in developing the project. "Simon had seen the planting we did for the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park in 2012, and thought that something similar should be tried in Sheffield," says Nigel. "I worked very closely with Zac Tudor, then principal landscape architect for Sheffield City Council, to help develop feasibility ideas for the scheme, using two of my studio design modules with students to develop ideas and visuals that were subsequently used for consultation and fund-raising."

Zac was responsible for the design and co-ordination of the whole complex multi-disciplinary project, and Nigel collaborated on the planting design, contributing plant lists and planting suggestions.

In fact, the real genius of this scheme is that it works on so many different levels. Primarily, it is a sustainable drainage system (SUDS) that captures occasional extreme rainfall in free-draining temporary holding areas until it can naturally percolate back

into the surrounding ground. This relieves pressure on the urban network of drains and significantly reduces the risk of localised flooding. The tree layer contributes to urban cooling, and the linear nature of the scheme creates a continuous green wildlife corridor. "But in addition to the environmental and visual benefits, this was a genuinely visionary move by Sheffield City Council to establish a very high-quality landscape scheme to create an attractive environment that would encourage businesses to move back into the area," says Nigel.

And, of course, it is extremely beautiful. These planting schemes are positively gardenesque in their richness, diversity and impact. Small multi-stemmed trees and large shrubs provide a permanent structure that anchors a seasonally shifting mixture of surprisingly interesting perennials, ranging from the spring-flowering native *Pulsatilla vulgaris* and *Primula veris*, through spring and summer bulbs such as the spires of orange *Eremurus x isabellinus* 'Cleopatra', alliums and lilies, to an abundance of robust late daisies. A matrix of ornamental grasses contributes to the late-season display.

"People really respond to colourful naturalistic planting, and having dramatic

To continue turn to page 81 ►





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## 16 KEY PLANTS

**1 *Erigeron* 'Dunkelste Aller'** An upright fleabane that has unusual deep violet-purple, ray-like flowers and eye-catching yellow centres. 1m x 50cm. RHS H6, USDA 2a-8b†.

**2 *Phlomis tuberosa*** Whorls of lilac-purple, hooded flowers are held on tall, dark-purple stems. The flowers fade well to provide interest and structure in winter. 1.5m x 50cm. RHS H5, USDA 6a-9b.

**3 *Achillea* 'Paprika'** Opening an orange-red, the flowers of 'Paprika' fade as they age to a more dusty orange. A good self-seeder in free-draining soil and important pollinator attractor. 1m x 50cm. AGM\*. RHS H7, USDA 3a-8b.

**4 *Stipa gigantea*** Robust grass providing a long season of interest, particularly for its tall, arching, oat-like panicles that mature to a tawny gold. 2.5m x 1m. AGM. RHS H4, USDA 6a-9b.

**5 *Sisyrinchium striatum*** Good structural plant with strongly upright, lance-shaped leaves that give rise to tall stems carrying clusters of creamy-yellow flowers. Will self-seed. 1m x 50cm. RHS H4, USDA 5a-9b.

**6 *Salvia nemorosa* 'Caradonna'** Clump-forming member of the sage family with long-lasting display of deep-purple flower spikes. 50cm x 50cm. AGM. RHS H7, USDA 4a-8b.

**7 *Origanum* 'Rosenkuppel'** Low-growing perennial forming clumps with rounded leaves and clusters of deep-rose-coloured flowers, loved by insects. 60cm x 60cm. AGM. RHS H7.

**8 *Artemisia ludoviciana* 'Silver Queen'** Striking, slender, silver-grey leaves that act well as a foil to purples and pinks. Good as a groundcover plant and usefully drought tolerant. 1m x 1m. RHS H6.

16 key plants continues on page 78



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## 16 KEY PLANTS

**9 *Gypsophila* 'Rosenschleier'** Low-mounded perennial with a starry veil of small, pale-pink double flowers. 50cm x 50cm. AGM. RHS H6.

**10 *Eremurus x isabellinus* 'Cleopatra'** Gorgeous foxtail lily bringing height and colour to a planting scheme. The densely flowered spikes start as tight buds in deep orange and open to give star-shaped flowers in a vibrant peach. 2.5m x 1m. RHS H6.

**11 *Kalimeris incisa* 'Charlotte'** Flowering over a long period from summer and into autumn, this Japanese aster produces a spray of daisy-like flowers with pale petals and bright-yellow centre. 1m x 50cm. RHS H7, USDA 5a-9b.

**12 *Calamagrostis x acutiflora* 'Karl Foerster'** A tall ornamental grass with clumps of arching leaves and upright stems of narrow panicles, fading to tawny brown in autumn and winter. 1.5m x 1m. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 5a-9b.

**13 *Kniphofia* 'Sunningdale Yellow'** A smaller red-hot poker with slender flowers in a rich yellow, flowering early from July through to October. 90cm x 50cm. AGM. RHS H5.

**14 *Lychnis chalcidonica*** Small, cross-shaped flowers in bright scarlet are held in a flat head on upright stems. A great flash of colour and good for pollinators. 1m x 50cm. AGM. RHS H7.

**15 *Acer tataricum* subsp. *ginnala*** Can be grown as a bushy shrub or small tree. Its distinctive three-lobed leaves turn deep red in autumn along with colourful seed keys. 8m x 8m. RHS H7, USDA 2a-8b.

**16 *Sesleria autumnalis*** Neat clumps of evergreen grass with narrow leaves in a yellowish green. 60m x 60m. AGM. RHS H7, USDA 5a-8b.

\*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society.  
†Hardiness ratings given where available.



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Included among the planting are wooden totem-like structures, designed to create habitats for pollinators and other wildlife. The street furniture picks up on the striking burnt-orange spires of *Eremurus x isabellinus* 'Cleopatra'.

In cities there seems to be an almost magnetic attraction to colourful, flower-rich, yet natural planting







# People really respond to colourful naturalistic planting, and having dramatic winter-green plants

One of the outstanding benefits of introducing the planting beds is the fact that 24,000 bathtubs' worth of water is prevented from entering Sheffield's sewage treatment works each year. The project has shown a 561 per cent increase in biodiversity.

▷ winter-green plants such as the New Zealand sedge, *Carex secta*, contributes to year-round appeal," says Nigel. "In cities, where people can easily lose contact with the natural world, there seems to be an almost magnetic attraction to colourful, flower-rich, yet natural planting."

It all looks rather expensive, but that is another surprising aspect of the project. "Replacing the conventional network of road drains and gulleys with beautiful 'green infrastructure' can be very cost-effective," says Nigel. "The actual amount of maintenance required is relatively low, but it does need a different set of skills and knowledge to that needed for the usual type of urban planting."

Nigel believes the plantings probably have ten years before they will need a wholesale revamp, but Sheffield City Council is now fully on board. The ethos is embedded, the concept is being rolled out around the city and that can only be good for the economy, good for people and good for the planet. □

## USEFUL INFORMATION

Find out more about Sheffield's Grey to Green project at [greytogreen.org.uk](http://greytogreen.org.uk)

• Nigel's *Gardens Illustrated* Masterclass: How to create long-season planting schemes is available at [gardensillustrated.com](http://gardensillustrated.com)

## Long-season planting

"It is useful to think about the functional characteristics of the plants, and how they contribute to the visual impression through the year," explains Nigel. "I start with 'Anchor Plants' – plants that give a strong structural or architectural character for much of the year. In the Grey to Green scheme, *Carex secta*, *Stipa gigantea* and *Eupatorium cannabinum* 'Flore Pleno' have this role, as well as multi-stem shrubs. Typically these are scattered at low density. 'Satellite' plants are those that don't necessarily have a strong architectural character but which contribute the main visual character of the planting. Seasonal perennials, such as asters, irises, and many others come into this category and provide a long succession of flowering. A really important component are 'filler plants' – short-lived, self-seeding perennials that fill gaps early on, before the longer-term plants fill the space – *Agastache*, *Lychnis coronaria*, and *Verbena bonariensis*, for example. Finally, bulbs create intense, yet ephemeral, seasonal interest. Summer-flowering bulbs, such as alliums, lilies and eremurus, are a real feature of the Grey to Green plantings."

## Climate aware

At the time of construction, the Grey to Green scheme was the UK's largest urban water-sensitive design project. Key to the project are bioswales – shallow depressions that act in the same way as rain gardens; collecting, slowing-down and cleaning surface water-runoff. They can fill up temporarily with water during heavy rainfall, but are not bog gardens because the water can drain away, either into the soil beneath, or into subsurface drains. In the Grey to Green scheme, the bioswales slope gently on each side to the central low point. Water flows into them from the road surface along their entire edge. In a garden setting, a good way to think of a bioswale is as a glorified ditch. "It's important that the soil is free-draining and that the sides are not steep, so that there is ample space for planting and the slopes are not prone to erosion," Nigel notes.



# TIJANA BLANUSA

The head of the RHS Ecosystem Services Research Programme,  
on identifying the plant traits that can benefit the wider environment  
and why you really need to plant a hawthorn hedge

WORDS ALYS FOWLER PORTRAIT JASON INGRAM

**H**ave you ever wondered which species might make the most superior hedge or what the best street tree is? Not just look good but mitigate against flash flooding or incept the most particulate pollution? Dr Tijana Blanus has. She leads the Royal Horticultural Society's Ecosystem Services Research Programme, which looks into the environmental benefits of gardens and green infrastructure. Her work is enabling us to understand the contribution plants make to our living environments. "It's not just a tree in a city, it's a cooling system," she says. "It's storing carbon, it's reducing noise, improving air quality, increasing biodiversity. I am just fascinated by that, by how much a plant can do."

Tijana grew up in Belgrade, Serbia, and spent a lot of time in her grandfather's garden. "When he retired he bought a plot of land, and took up bee keeping and tending an orchard," she says. "One day he said: 'Look I pruned this tree and there's a half-kilo apple.' It was really the biggest apple I'd ever seen and then he said, 'And here is a tree I haven't pruned,' and pointed to one with much smaller apples. That really fascinated me as a kid, how you can manipulate a tree."

Her fascination prompted her to study agronomy and crops science at university followed by a master's degree in plant physiology, before moving to the UK to begin a PhD on how much a cherry tree can sustain in fruit. Then in 2003 she saw that the RHS was looking for a horticultural scientist. "I knew straight way that it was my job."

The role, which has occupied her ever since, was conceived as a way to further links between the RHS and the University of Reading, where she's based. There she teaches green infrastructure and supervises numerous students from undergraduates to PhD students, but also works closely with the RHS advice team, and with architects, planners and builders to help inform better planting choices.

"I like very practical science and I'm a stickler for a simple, cheap solution," she says. For example, climbers such as ivy are good as a green wall in terms of their insulation properties, but can damage the building, which is why one of her students has looked into using anti-graffiti paint as a cheap solution to prevent ivy from attaching to a building. But the projects she's worked on span everything from optimising water use in container-grown bedding plants to houseplants and their effect on our wellbeing and how we incorporate green infrastructure into our living environment.

"When I did my first project on a green façade, I really had to justify why I was doing it, there were so few references. But the understanding has grown exponentially from then. There's a real understanding that we need to incorporate plants into our urban planning and architecture," she says. "Of course, gardeners understand this, but we need to expand that out into policy work. I mean people are putting in plastic lawns and plastic hedges!"

She knows there is much more to do and many more areas to look into. She's curious about urban food production and wants to investigate the genuine impact of growing your own. "What's the nutritional value, how much do you really have to grow to make an impact?" she asks. "Plus, there's more work to do on green

infrastructure, we understand a lot about what does and doesn't work on a species level, but we need to look into planting mixes rather than monocultures; can we enhance the overall potential of a garden with the right mix? It's so important to understand the details."

Even so her research is already making a difference. "I'm humbled that the science I do has a practical impact. When someone comes up to me at a conference and says: 'I saw one of your papers and we tried it out in our garden,' then I'm very happy that I get to push our science forward."

And if you're still wondering what is the best hedge for reducing flooding, that would be hawthorn. It takes up

a lot of water while in growth, and then transpires it, increasing the soil's capacity to receive subsequent rainfall that could otherwise end up in drains. "When it's physiologically active that plant just pumps up water. But it's deciduous, so in the winter it's not providing as much of a service, which is why we're experimenting with the very best mix," says Tijana. "Also *Thuja plicata*; it has the most amazing canopy storage, it holds on to the rain and funnels it down into the soil over a long period, so it's really good for sandy soils. Canopy storage of water in constant drizzle can make a real difference."

Her own garden, she admits, is an unplanned jumble of left-over plants from experiments – "I'm a plant scientist not a gardener" – but she does at least have a hedge. "It's the only one left in the street. It looks lovely, I do very little other than cut it once a year." Thanks to Tijana's research we know that hedge is doing an awful lot of work. □

## USEFUL INFORMATION

Find out more about the RHS's science research at [rhs.org.uk/science](https://rhs.org.uk/science)









## IN BRIEF

**What** A coastal garden almost exclusively comprising ornamental grasses.

**Where** West Sussex.

**Size** A little over an acre.

**Soil** Chalky loam.

**Climate** Coastal; sunny and windy.

**Hardiness zone** USDA 9.

# Motion picture

Sophie Walker's assured design for a coastal garden in the south of England is a skilfully choreographed blend of ornamental grasses that form a fluid and soothing patchwork of colour and movement

WORDS MATT COLLINS PHOTOGRAPHS BENNET SMITH





**V**isiting this sanctuary of a garden on the Sussex coast, designer Sophie Walker's bold yet self-restrained design comes as something of a surprise. After crossing a short lawn, you round the house, expecting to find perhaps some robust perennials, maybe a few escapee hollyhocks and a gentle sweep towards the shoreline. Instead you are met by a broad succession of contrasting grasses and a gravel pathway that beckons you in.

Lifting from the acre-deep grassland scheme are architectural specimen trees: ginkgo, cherry, *Acer davidii* and the arrow-leaved *Acer capillipes*; a lush, green *Parrotia persica* and what appears to be a large and wild willow towards the back. The path leads you there; you are compelled to follow it for there is no other way forward. "The garden is not automatically revealing, like a lawn with borders," says Sophie. "This is much more like pushing you through a passage. You actually have to make your way through it, and by doing that you find different vistas and viewpoints." Indeed, as you walk, you sense a narrative unfolding.

Sophie describes this garden as intentionally restful on the eye – a space where the clear lines of a pathway are the only hard lines of the garden. However, greatly ▶

**Above left** Grasses are brought alive by sunlight. In the foreground the reddened florets of *Calamagrostis brachytricha* bring colour to the scheme while creating a soft foil for a multi-stemmed snake bark maple (*Acer capillipes*). Besides the grasses, differing height levels are achieved through stout shrubs, such as cornus and hazel, and taller trees including a prominent *Ginkgo biloba* beside the house.

**Above** Silver-grey granite gravel has been used for the paths, contrasting brightly with the muted tones of the grasses while retaining the natural feel. "I love how smart it looks," says Sophie. "In cloudy weather it seems lighter and in bright weather it doesn't seem too white."





**Above** Contrast is an essential feature of a garden dedicated to grasses. While putting plants together in this scheme, Sophie aimed to create a patchwork, whereby 1m x 1.5m “groupings” were interspersed and repeated without ever becoming repetitive. In this way, opposing colours – from blue-green and yellow to heavier ochres – bring a liveliness to the overall garden.

▷ influenced by Japanese garden design, there is also an element of control to her scheme; the journey you are taken on provokes a bodily response. “The way the Japanese make gardens is almost as a piece of choreography,” says Sophie. “You have to move through the garden in a particular way because of how the paving has been orchestrated, or because you have to pass through an arch or gateway. Because of that you’re constantly having to address the way your body presents to the garden space and how you then experience the garden.”

Choreography is a good word to describe a garden conceived to reflect motion. “The client has a strong interest in ballet,” says Sophie. “The first thing they said to me was that they wanted something that moved.” A garden of grasses came directly to mind. “It was actually one of the more obvious, more radical, just instantly clear things to do. The idea immediately went down well, which was great from my perspective – being trusted with doing something quite so bold.”

Implementing a scheme almost exclusively comprising ornamental grasses was for Sophie something tried and tested. Her first project after studying garden design was a garden in west London – a “field-like” space attached to an old cottage, with an emphasis on seedheads and autumn colour. In that garden, a raised, ▷





There is a freedom in not having too many hard lines and in creating a landscape that feels almost completely restful; it's peaceful to watch things constantly moving

## How to design with grasses

Grasses planted en masse lend well to a naturalistic style of garden. Achieving a sense of structural dynamism within such a scheme, however, requires skill. Using a palette of more than 30 different cultivars sourced from the Netherlands and from Knoll Gardens in Dorset, Sophie began by dividing the grasses into categories of height and colour, before approaching the overall layout. "I did everything in clusters – individual plants grouped to form what would appear as single volumes," she explains. "I made sure that no 'blob' was too large or overwhelming, and that the scheme was really as layered and complex as it could be without losing emphasis of a particular group."

Another key element in the process was ensuring a steady progression of height. "Because you see everything from the paths, or from above when you're in the house," says Sophie. "I always worked to the centre of the bed, building up the planting from both sides, and ensuring that the height escalates towards the middle." The lofty plumes of *Miscanthus* and *Calamagrostis*, for example, offer a higher central tier.

In addition, Sophie underlines the importance of avoiding too much repetition of colour. Ideally, she says the aim should be to create "a sense of a patchwork, almost".





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## Plant details

**1 *Panicum virgatum* 'Northwind'** In full sun, gives great seasonal interest, its initial glaucous-green sheen becoming a rich orange-yellow by autumn. 1.5m x 1m. AGM\*. RHS H5, USDA 5a-9b†.

**2 *Calamagrostis x acutiflora* 'Karl Foerster'** Yellow-ochre is an essential of the ornamental grass palette, amply provided by this hardy reed grass. 1.8m x 50cm. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 5a-9b.

**3 *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Morning Light'** Erect yet compact, with pinkish autumn flowers. The fine leaves are delicately arched and streaked with white. 1.5m x 1m. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 6b-7a.

**4 *Deschampsia cespitosa* 'Goldtau'** Bears long-lasting, voluminous yet airy flower plumes that rise above deep-green leaves. 75cm x 75cm. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 4a-9b.

▷ aluminium-edged path navigated geometric blocks of differing grasses, from feather-flowered pennisetums to tall, architectural reed grasses (*Calamagrostis*).

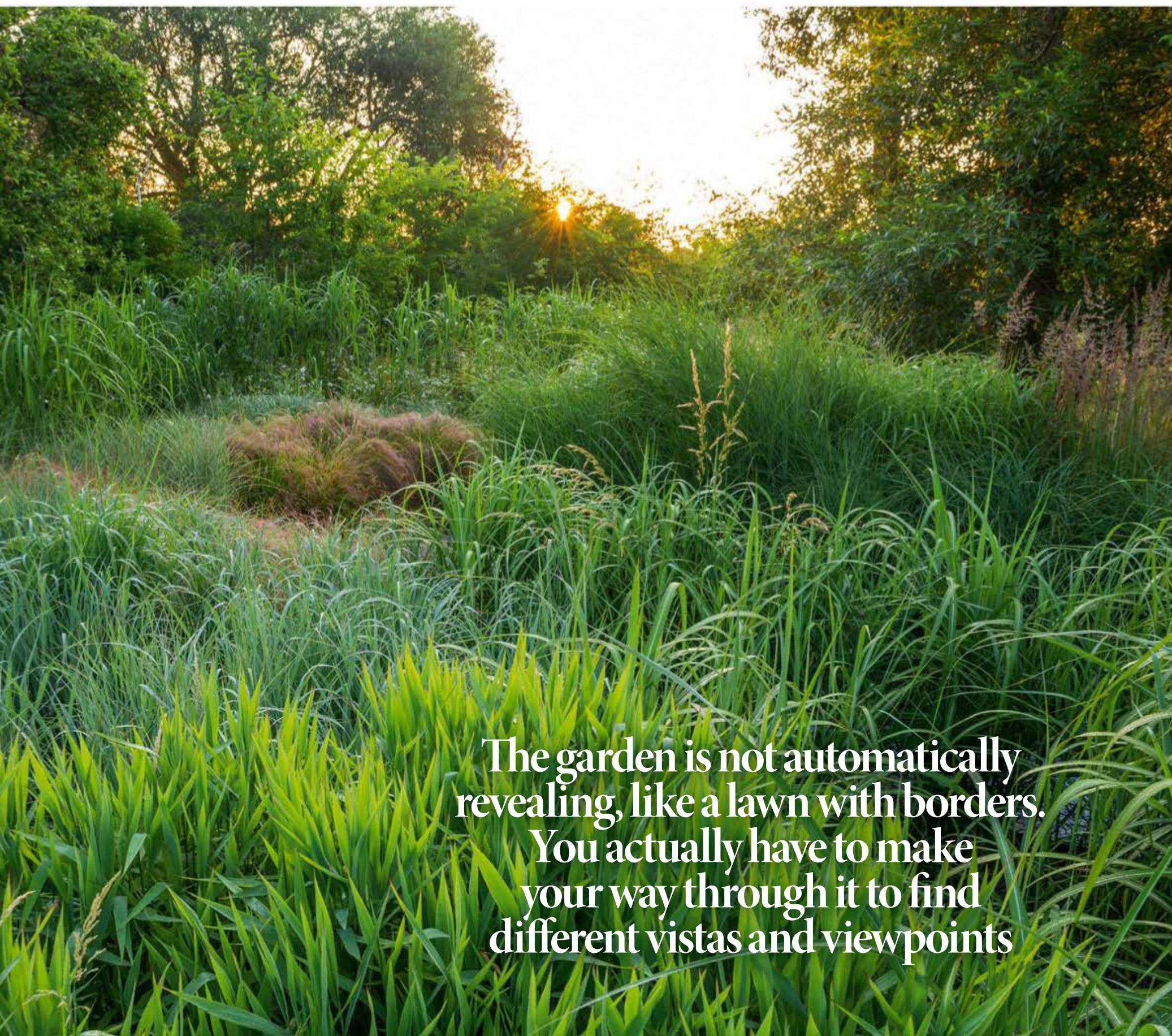
For this coastal commission, Sophie drew on the success of this scheme. “It was just the freedom of not having too many hard lines anywhere, and of creating a landscape that felt somehow almost completely restful; if things are constantly moving, which they are in both gardens, it’s just so peaceful to watch it blowing in the wind. Being near the coast, where migratory birdlife is common, you’d also hope to be able to provide for birds, and grasses just feel like a great choice.” Birdsong was palpably and pleasantly abundant as I navigated through the richly textured planting.

To make such a concentrated planting palette like this feel impactful, the range of grasses needed to be both dynamic and contrasting. Sophie’s plant list therefore includes a great variety of genera, from airy *Sesleria* and *Deschampsia* cultivars to fountain-like clumps of *Panicum* and *Stipa*. Colour, too, was of course crucial – the maroon-tinged gold of *Briza media* ‘Limouzi’, for example, and the pink-purple effect of *Miscanthus sinensis* ‘Kleine Fontäne’.

As such, to follow the footpath – a slim, neatly presented ribbon of silver-grey granite-based gravel – is to be reminded of the great diversity of grasses in

\*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society.  
†Hardiness ratings given where available.





The garden is not automatically revealing, like a lawn with borders. You actually have to make your way through it to find different vistas and viewpoints

horticultural cultivation and their surprising individuality of form. As sunlight falls upon certain spots it reveals the tufted, ochre florets of *Deschampsia cespitosa* 'Schottland', the glaucous sheen of *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Morning Light', or the delicate, almost sparkling sprays of *Briza media* seedheads.

And while new vistas are revealed around each corner, so too, rather cleverly, are practical break-out spots: an area of secluded seating; a trampoline for the children; and towards the back, in the shade of a retained mature white poplar, a tennis court, its sides festooned with a screen of Virginia creeper.

Close to the house, meanwhile, weather-softened boards and cement-rendered walls provide a calming and open terrace area from which to take in this spectacular grassland oasis, which will remain standing throughout winter for the seedheads, offering year-round interest. And then there's the ease of it all: "Grasses are super low key," says Sophie. "They're just strimmed off in February, clippings are left on the ground as mulch, and that's it." □

#### USEFUL INFORMATION

Find out more about Sophie's work at [sophiewalkerstudio.com](http://sophiewalkerstudio.com)

**Above** Close to the sea, the garden is exposed to a good deal of wind, which is captured beautifully in the movement of lighter varieties of grasses such as *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Kleine Fontäne' and *Panicum virgatum* 'Prairie Sky'. Mature trees meanwhile ensure a level of protection and enclosure for the space as a whole.



# Nature and nurture

The inspirational garden of landscape designer Kathleen Murphy is a test bed for planting ideas, and a lesson in creating a sustainable family space that is lived in and loved

WORDS ALI HEATH PHOTOGRAPHS MARNIE HAWSON

## IN BRIEF

**What** Sustainable family garden that acts as a testbed for its designer owner.

**Where** Victoria, Australia.

**Size** Just under two acres.

**Soil** Heavy volcanic black clay.

**Climate** From 40°C in summer, to -5°C with frosts in winter.

**Hardiness zone** USDA 10.





**W**ith more than 14 years of honing her craft in landscape garden design, Australian-born expert Kathleen Murphy understands how both the surrounding vernacular and a client's individual interior style play a vital role in shaping the creative process behind each of her garden designs. Clients are drawn to her personal touch and magical ability to transform a space into something special, as if it has always belonged.

“For me it is important to integrate the prevailing landscape into the look and feel of any outdoor space I create. I take time to get to know my clients – to understand how they use their homes and what is important to them. Gardens should be lived in and enjoyed; it is never just about the aesthetic.”

Having moved to their family home 14 years ago, Kathleen and her husband had been busy juggling work and raising their three children, while Kathleen organically established her landscape design business, working temporarily from the children's playroom. The property, a 1980s' country ranch-style house, is set in just under two acres, and at the front Kathleen inherited an established, English-inspired garden from the previous owners. At the rear, the backyard was a blank canvas, and in 2017 Kathleen gave herself the space to ►

**Facing page** *Agave americana* underplanted with seascape (*Lomandra confertifolia*).

**Below** The striking, northeast-facing timber and glass studio space is clad in fire-resistant Australian hardwood, silvertop ash. Commercial-scale, floor-to-ceiling glazing brings the outside in, creating a motivating space from which to design. Plants in the foreground include satin flower (*Sisyrinchium striatum*) and seascape (*Lomandra confertifolia*). Trees include the common olive (*Olea europaea*) and *Acer platanoides* 'Crimson Sentry'.





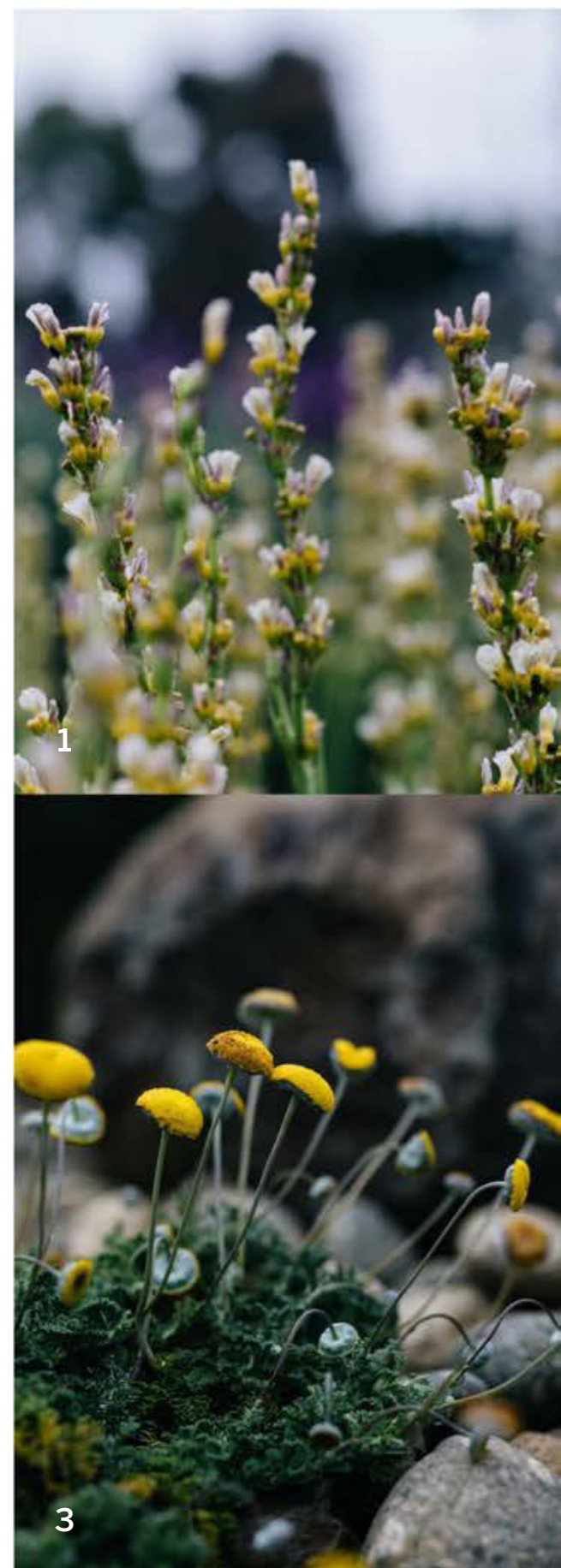
**Below** In the foreground, plants native to Madeira include the very hardy and frost-tolerant *Teucrium betonicum*, which enjoys a crop of light-purple flower spikes. To complement, groundcover with similar colour tones includes *Verbena rigida*. Planted around the bridge is a variety of *Lomandra* and *Dianella* species.

**Far right** The deck is made from sustainably sourced Merbau timber, and is framed with the large, strappy *Carex appressa*. The trees in the background are multi-stemmed *Eucalyptus forresterae* 'Little Star'.

▷ rethink it – creating a dedicated studio for her business and three-person design team, and an inspirational family garden.

In winter, the north-facing garden is shrouded in early-morning mists, and low cloud conceals distant mountain peaks; but by late morning the frosty starts break into crisp, bright days. Kathleen's approach to the design of her own garden followed the same principles she applies with clients. Her husband, Rob, and three children, aged from 13 to 16, were encouraged to share ideas, to ensure the garden matched their individual needs and wants: space for the kids to kick a ball around and ride bikes, and defined zones for a billabong, grotto and firepit. "It's a place for me to experiment with new ideas for work, and a space for us as a family to unwind, relax, explore, and feel connected to nature. This has been life-changing in terms of its effect on my creativity."

The design frames the amazing view of the surrounding Macedon Ranges, and mirrors the contours of the landscape, with raised earth mounds facilitating drainage in the nutritious, but heavy, clay soil. "I always consider the view from every window in the house, and like to draw the eye out to something special in the garden." It's no surprise, then, that a growing group of architects involve Kathleen early in the design phase of projects, as her ability to connect the exterior and interior is so intuitive. ▷





## Water in a garden

Australia is experiencing a change in its weather and enduring longer, drier periods throughout the year. Rather than simply gathering water in bulky water butts, in her garden Kathleen makes use of new techniques for collecting, using and saving water in a more aesthetically pleasing way. As part of the garden redesign, she installed an underground wastewater-treatment system that links to the house and studio. In Australia, all new residential housing developments with more than an acre of land are required to have a water-treatment system that involves taking the wastewater from toilets and household use into an at-home, mini-treatment plant where the water is recycled for garden purposes.

With water a scarce commodity, the garden also benefits from an irrigation system that feeds the garden in part from the billabong. Water is also collected from rooftops, which is standard practice in Australia, with the government even giving homeowners a rebate on the cost of installing a water tank. A similar system could be used in the UK, where, instead of using a water butt, collected water could be fed discreetly into a more attractive, open, ornamental pond or small water feature using a pump system connected to a tap. Plant choices in Kathleen's garden are also drought tolerant, as it would be impossible to irrigate the full garden area.

### PLANT DETAILS

**1 *Sisyrinchium striatum*** The yellow satin flower has stiff, upright stems carrying clusters of starry, pale-yellow flowers along their length. 80cm x 25cm. RHS H4, USDA 5a-9b†.

**2 *Enchylaena tomentosa*** Low-growing native Australian sub-shrub known as ruby saltbush. Very drought-tolerant with small, edible, red berries. 1m x 1.5m.

**3 *Cotula lineariloba*** Mat-forming groundcover with mounds of silvery foliage and solitary, yellow, button-like flowerheads on long, wiry stems. 30cm x 15cm. USDA 9a-10b.

**4 *Beschorneria yuccoides*** Arching racemes of yellow-green tubular flowers with showy, pinkish-red bracts above fleshy, grey-green leaves. A favourite of Kathleen's. 1.5m x 1.8m. AGM\*. RHS H3.

\*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society.  
†Hardiness ratings given where available.



2



4





**Below** Kathleen has created a billabong that runs through the garden and is a favourite spot for all the family to relax. Billabong is an Aboriginal term for a pool of water left behind from a river after it has altered its course. This one has been artificially created and is lined with clay. Large basalt boulders have been sawn to create stepping stones across the billabong. These were sourced nearby, left over from farmers clearing paddocks to grow crops. Aquatic plants include Australian natives, such as milfoil (*Myriophyllum cripatum*) nardoo (*Marsilea drummondii*), which oxygenate the water for the three eastern long-necked tortoises and native fish.

▷ Kathleen grew up in Australia, but after finishing university she moved to Dublin to work for Enterprise Ireland, which was next door to the National Botanic Gardens of Ireland. Her many visits to the gardens inspired a gardening hobby, which turned into a passion and before she moved back to Australia with Rob she had retrained for a career horticulture.

“Throughout our garden, planting is intentionally hardy as we have extremes of weather, ranging from 40-degree heat to harsh frosts. I like to layer structural Australian natives, such as long, grass-like *Lomandra*, with succulents and *Westringia*, along with more exotic Mediterranean and textural Californian foliage. Pathways are lined with olive and gum trees and medicinal herbs, and tall masses of sticky boobialla (*Myoporum viscosum*) screen boundaries. Seasonal colour is important to me, and I use the garden as a test bed for client projects – if plants don’t survive, they are not replanted. I love pops of seasonal colour – sedum for burnt-orange autumn accents, and *Verbena bonariensis*, *Salvia nemorosa* for their purple tones, which work well with our year-round palette of soft muted greys, greens and blues.”

As part of Kathleen’s inherent focus on sustainability, discarded soil, basalt rocks and materials from client projects and local building sites have been repurposed in her own garden – and form the basis of the earth mounds that create sculptural interest throughout. “I grew up on a dairy farm so a desire to keep costs down, repurpose and





nurture the environment is part of who I am.” Preferred suppliers are locally based, and Kathleen actively supports her local guild of skilled craftspeople, who make limited-edition bird baths and Corten steel firepits to her designs.

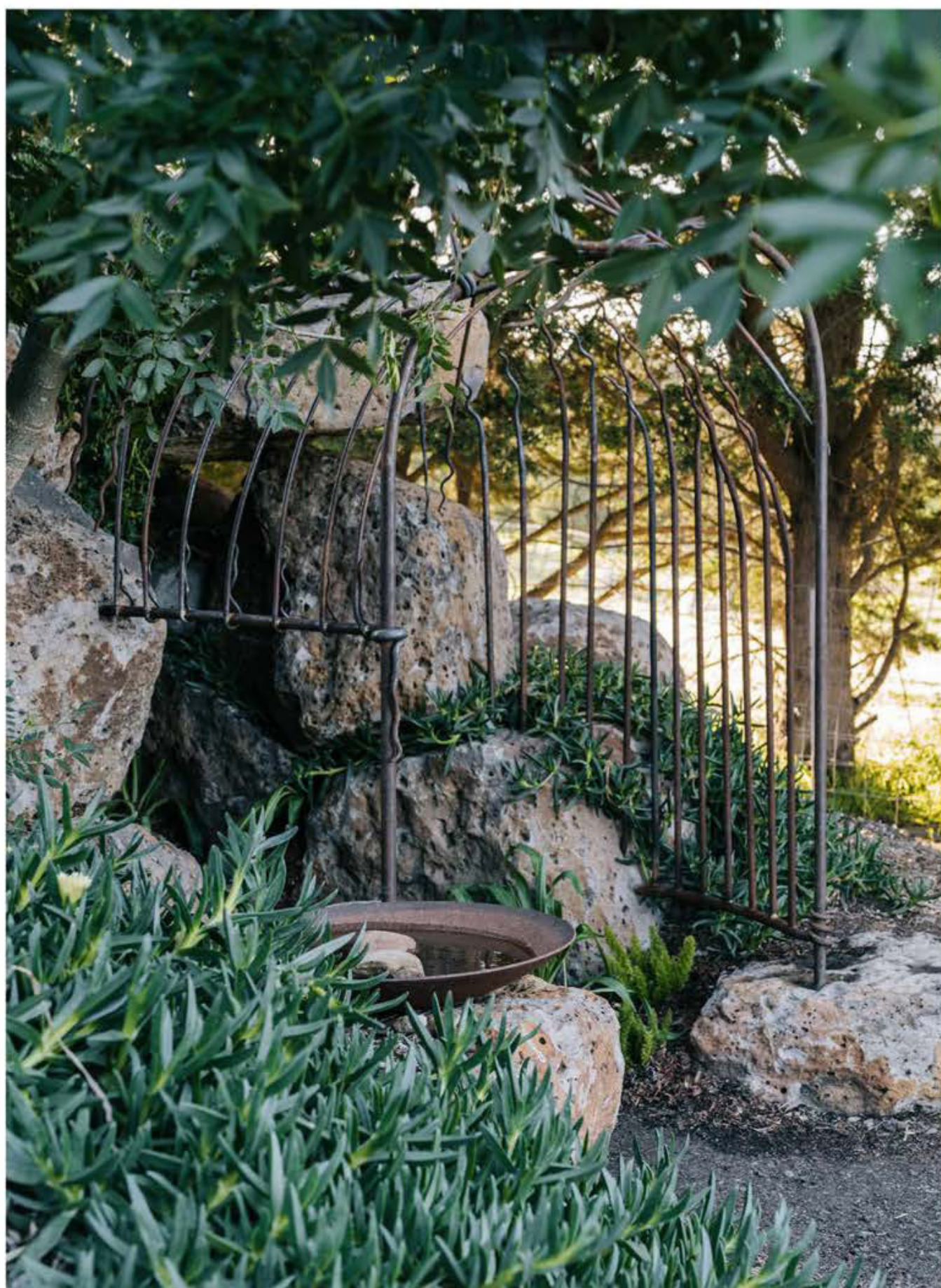
The billabong, Kathleen’s favourite part of the garden, was also the most challenging part of the design, as it involved heavy machinery having to come through the land. Lined with a clay liner and aquatic plants, it is a wonderful self-cleaning feature that provides water for irrigation, and a cool, natural pool for the family to swim in. It has also encouraged an abundance of wildlife into the garden – providing a home for fish, reptiles, dragonflies, butterflies, birds (rosellas, blue wrens, and a family of Australian magpies), insects and bees. “We have three beehives and I’ve noticed the dramatic increase in pollination. I love sitting here observing all the activity, it feeds my creativity,” says Kathleen.

Going forward Kathleen is planning to take garden tours and run workshops as an extension to her design business. “Connecting with nature keeps me grounded and there is a strong spiritual and meditative side to our garden. As a family it helps us all unwind and feel rejuvenated, and being able to share this with others feels very rewarding.” □

#### USEFUL INFORMATION

Find out more about Kathleen’s work at [kmldesign.com.au](http://kmldesign.com.au)

**Below** A forged steel frame creates the entrance to this rock enclosure – a contemporary take on a traditional European grotto. It creates a sense of place and provides an opportunity to remember former family members who have passed, with photographs, candles and a Celtic cross honouring their memory. The native groundcover *Carpobrotus glaucescens* creeps over the rocks, with the branches of the desert ash (*Fraxinus angustifolia* subsp. *oxycarpa*) providing a shady nook in the garden.





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# Design

*News and sourcebook*



## ROMAN GARDENS

Landscape designers Urquhart & Hunt, winners of Best in Show for their rewilding garden at this year's RHS Chelsea Flower Show, have created the gardens around a reimagined fourth-century Roman villa at The Newt in Somerset. Using plants and trees found in contemporaneous British Roman sites, or documented in paintings and writings, the designers have incorporated a pergola moon garden dedicated to the goddess Luna, a fishpond, a flower meadow, an orchard, medicinal and kitchen gardens and a topiary garden. [urquharthunt.com](http://urquharthunt.com); [thenewtinsomerset.com](http://thenewtinsomerset.com)



DAVE WATTS





## ① HEALING POWERS

As part of the RHS Healing Gardens programme, award-winning designer Adam Frost has designed a flowing space for staff and patients at London's University Hospital Lewisham. The garden, which opened earlier this summer, features a winding walkway along the River Ravensbourne leading into a woodland patch where wildflowers have been planted under the trees. Benches encourage visitors to stop and reflect. An area of raised beds provides opportunities for staff and the local community to grow plants, and training will be given so that staff and volunteers can look after the garden in the future. [rhs.org.uk](https://rhs.org.uk)

## ② STRIVING FOR PERFECTION

The 2022 International Garden Festival at Domaine de Chaumont-sur-Loire, France, features 24 show gardens on the theme of the Ideal Garden. The Garden of Reciprocity by US landscape architects RIOS won the prize for design for its reflection on the essential relationship between humans and nature, using mirrors and water to underline this symbiosis. French entry Ma Maison est un Jardin, designed by garden landscape company Passion Jardin as a romantic, planted house open to the elements (pictured above), won the prize for planting. Until 6 November; [domaine-chaumont.fr](https://domaine-chaumont.fr)

## ③ URBAN FOREST IN MADRID

Design studio West 8 has won an international competition to create a new Central Park for Madrid Nuevo Norte. The design, which is centred on sustainability and innovation, incorporates rain gardens, a meadow and a large lawn, with spaces for kiosks, terraces, pavilions and sport. The middle of the 35-acre urban forest will be a vegetation-clad spiral that will capture high breezes and create a cool space that will become the main meeting point. A series of flowing lines through the park will mirror the train tracks that crossed the original site. [west8.com](https://west8.com)

## ④ GREENING UP CANARY WHARF

Eden Project and Canary Wharf Group are working with Glenn Howells Architects to make London's Canary Wharf a greener, more biodiverse space. The plan will bring people closer to the water through interventions such as floating pontoons, bridges and boardwalks and will introduce new planting areas, parks and gardens. There will also be new spaces for arts and culture, and opportunities for water sports. The aim is to create a global example of best practice and innovation in biodiversity in an urban environment. [group.canarywharf.com](https://group.canarywharf.com); [glennhowells.co.uk](https://glennhowells.co.uk)





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### ⑤ MANCHESTER'S NEW EDEN

Europe's largest green wall, consisting of some 350,000 individual plants, will cover the façade of Eden, a 12-storey office building, which is being constructed on Passivhaus principles at New Bailey, Manchester. Thirty-two plant species grown by ANS Global, including geraniums, heucheras, rosemary, thyme and sarcococcas, have been selected for biodiversity, support of pollinators, reduction of air pollution and year-round interest. Rainwater harvesting will be used for the green wall. A mini version of the wall is on display at the construction site. Eden is expected to be completed in May 2023. [new-bailey.com](http://new-bailey.com)



### ⑥ FROM CHELSEA SHOW GARDEN TO PUBLIC PARK

Charlotte Harris and Hugo Bugg's 2021 RHS Chelsea Gold medal-winning pocket park garden is to be relocated and reconfigured in the area between Blackfriars Road and Tate Modern in Southwark, south London. The Roots in the Sky Garden, which will create a green spine down the pedestrianised Price's Street, will include a sculpture of more than 100 linear metres of metal pipes and will reassemble, in a series of raised beds, all the plants from the original garden. Subject to planning permission, the park should be open in spring 2023. [harrisbugg.com](http://harrisbugg.com)





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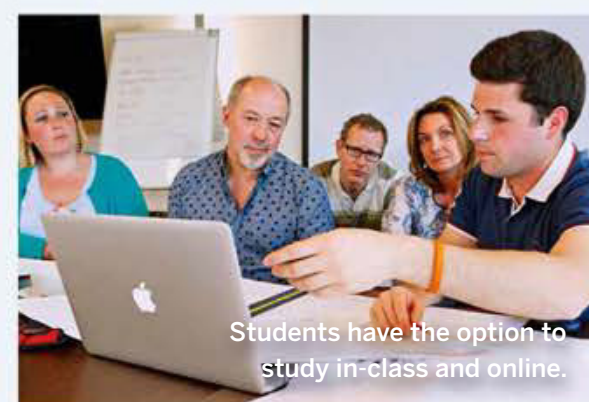
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The institute also offers a variety of programmes related to the land-based industries with Wildlife and Conservation Management being a popular choice with mature students or those returning to learning and looking to give something back and

engage with nature. Returners aged 25 and over can take advantage of the Change Your Path bursary of £1,000 to help with the cost of becoming a new student.

One recipient of the bursary, Kristyna Andrlova, changed from a career in the hospitality industry, to study Garden Design in Edinburgh her reasons for the change are "Simple yet complex. In my eyes, garden design means creating a piece of art, that consists of pieces of life. Life process fascinates me and I always wanted to create and help protect the environment. I think garden design encompasses all of these and so much more." Her plans after graduating are ambitious also, "I would like to get some work experience while studying and after graduation get a job in a GD/landscaping firm. Eventually,

I would like to start my own business once I feel competent enough to do so."

Ana Basto, another recipient, switched from working in a warehouse to the HND Wildlife and Conservation Management Programme at the Oatridge Campus. "I've found each aspect of the course has increased my knowledge and understanding and given me a realistic overview of the field of conservation. The Change Your Path bursary has given me the opportunity to focus on my studies for the last academic year, by supporting me with my finances and reducing some of the added pressures of studying full time while working part-time."

[sruc.ac.uk/horticulture](http://sruc.ac.uk/horticulture)  
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#### DR NOEL KINGSBURY

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Chris Beardshaw won Gold at RHS Chelsea in 2022 and teaches the Container Gardening course – perfect for gardeners just getting started or with smaller spaces, with projects ranging from choosing the right container to designing complex container gardens.

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Sally is gardener and writer and has a focus on sustainable gardening. She started growing “just a few beans”, before becoming completely self-sufficient for vegetables, fruit and herbs as well as gardening professionally. Sally teaches the Self-Sufficient Veg Gardening course.

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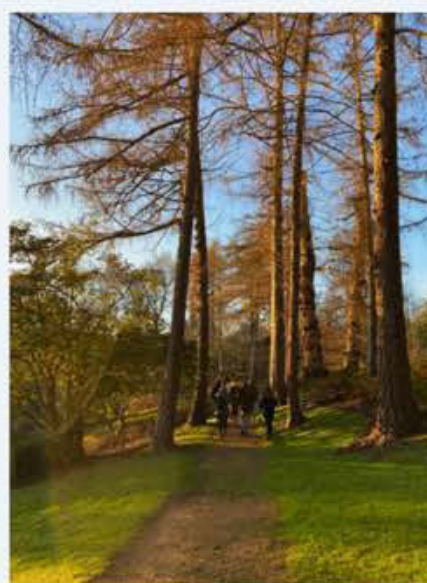
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## JIMI BLAKE'S NEW MEMBERSHIP PROGRAMME

Jimi Blake has launched his new membership programme – online gardening classes from Hunting Brook Gardens. Join renowned plantsman Jimi for his amazing series of online gardening courses. All courses were filmed at his spectacular Hunting Brook Gardens in Ireland throughout a full year in the garden. Jimi will guide you through all the practical work that he does in Hunting Brook for each season and you will learn the philosophy, techniques, and skills that make Hunting Brook one of the most magical gardens in Ireland. The courses take a detailed look at the plants that Jimi uses in his planting

designs, plant combinations, and succession planting. He will introduce you to hundreds of different plants which will take your plant passion to the next level. Each course includes beautiful instructional videos for each module and detailed notes that you can download and keep. These courses are suitable for the enthusiastic amateur and/or the professional horticulturist.

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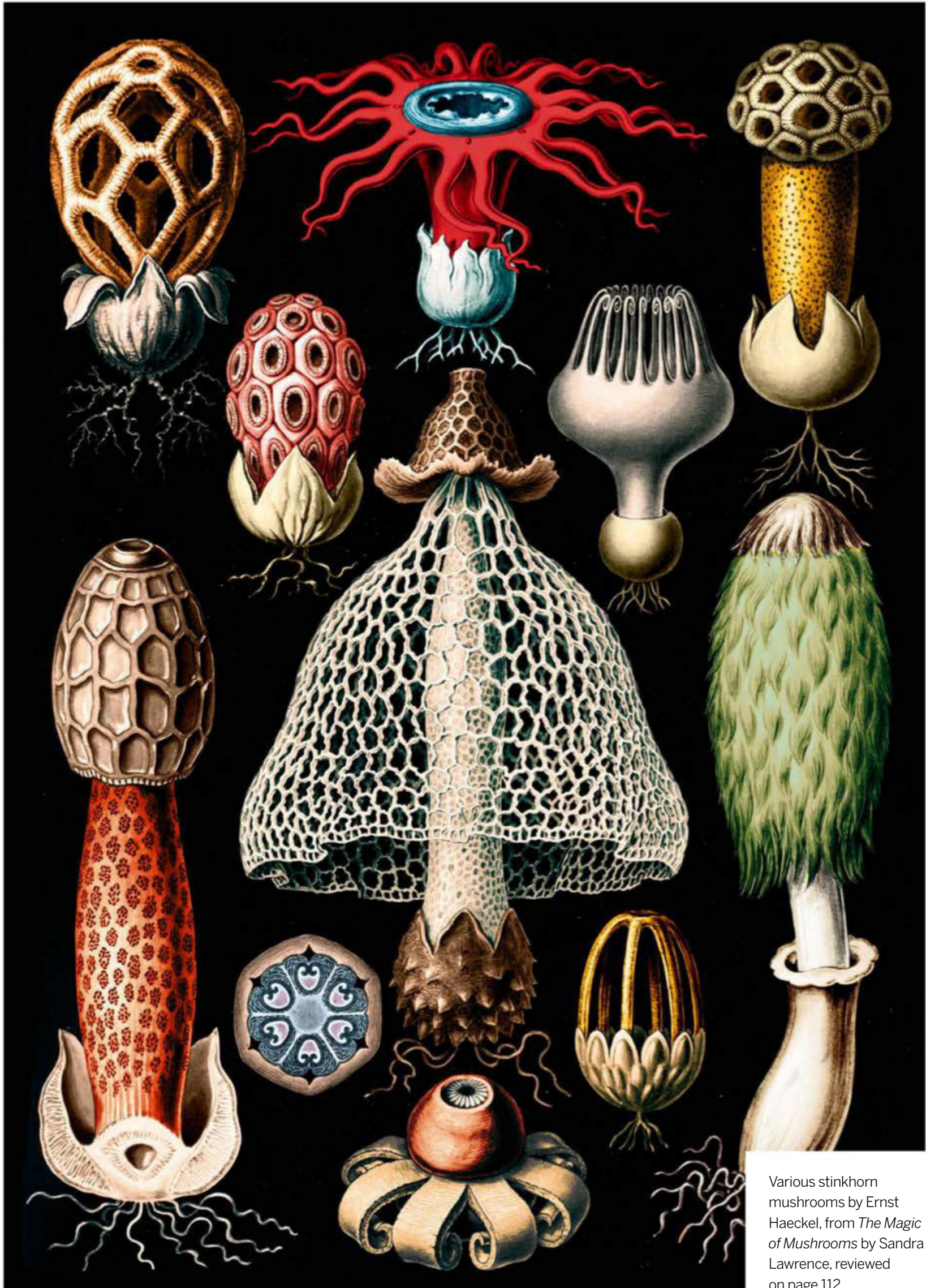


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# DOWNTOOLS

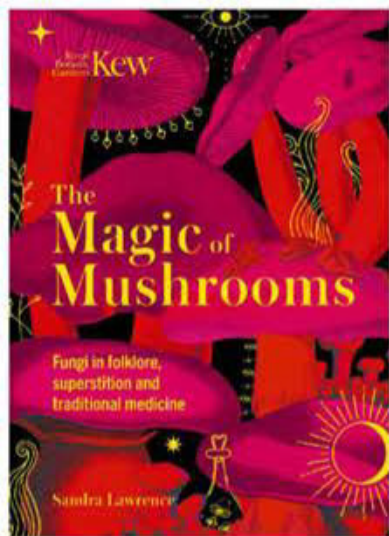
*Book reviews, the crossword and Alice Vincent*



Various stinkhorn mushrooms by Ernst Haeckel, from *The Magic of Mushrooms* by Sandra Lawrence, reviewed on page 112.



# BOOK REVIEWS



**THE MAGIC OF MUSHROOMS:  
FUNGI IN FOLKLORE,  
SUPERSTITION AND  
TRADITIONAL MEDICINE**

by Sandra Lawrence

Welbeck, £14.99

ISBN 978-1787399068

*A beautifully illustrated, easy and entertaining read about the abundance of folklore, stories and superstitions surrounding fungi.*

Reviewer Lia Leendertz is the author of *The Almanac: a Seasonal Guide*.

This is such a fun book about a fascinating topic. Author Sandra Lawrence has set about this obviously meaty subject with glee, and approaches every new chapter as a storyteller addressing a rapt audience. You can almost sense her rubbing her hands together.

This is no mean feat, as most of the entries are just a few pages long, and yet she delves into the fascinating histories behind such varying stories as the origins of Tokaji wine, or ‘noble rot’; delicious *Amanita caesarea*, so beloved of Claudius Caesar that it was named after him, and is still found growing along Roman roads where centurions discarded mushroom remains; and the ‘Mummy’s Curse’ that killed 11 of the people who first entered Tutankhamun’s tomb, but now suspected to be connected to spores of *Aspergillus* stirred up on breaking the tomb’s seal.

The majority of the book is historical but it concludes with a quick jaunt through the potential future fantastical

uses of fungi, from accompanying astronauts to Mars to soak up radiation, to self-healing buildings built from fungus-baked bricks.

The vast amount of research that must have gone into the writing of this book is apparent on every page, but it never feels dense or inaccessible and would make a wonderful gift book for anyone with even a passing interest in folklore or fungi.

It is also a real feast for the eyes, crammed full of examples of the way mushrooms have been depicted in art, from Russian postage stamps and Japanese wood blocks to 12th-century frescoes and much, much more. These images are generously used, often across whole spreads, and are printed on thick, matt paper; the whole thing satisfyingly chunky, colourful and tactile.

But it is the writing that really makes this book shine. Fungi are fascinating, and Sandra Lawrence really enjoys reminding us of that fact.



**THE SCIENCE OF COMPOST: LIFE,  
DEATH + DECAY IN THE GARDEN**

by Julian Doberski

Pimpernell Press, £9.99

ISBN 978-1914902932

*What’s hiding in your compost bin? This is a thorough look at what makes up the habitat that is rotting garden material. A most educational read.*

Reviewer Alys Fowler is a horticulturist, presenter and garden writer.

This book is truly for the compost geek and I, for one, have been waiting a long time for it. It takes a very serious, rigorous and thoroughly referenced deep dive into your compost heap. Not that this makes this book heavy in any way; it’s a breeze to read, but as it has science at its heart, it’s not going to forgo the fine detail.

First, there is a thorough discussion of the whats, whys and wherefores of the compost heap, which can roughly be broken down into living and chemical components. Everything gets a look-in, from the largest (earthworms) to the smallest: the microscopic organisms that live on leaf surfaces, a habitat known as the phylloplane (there’s a good Scrabble word); those found within plant tissues (endophytes); and those associated with plant roots (the root microbiome).

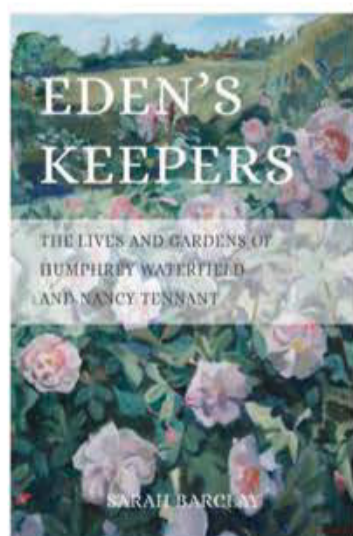
Thus, you learn that some invertebrates directly chew organic material – thank you

slugs, woodlice and millipedes – and that some graze on the microbial flora found on, in and around the surface of dead plant material. And because this is a web, rather than a chain, sometimes the big guys eat the small guys and a whole load of microbes dine on their faeces.

The book then delves further into matters of physicochemical and environmental decomposition – heat, moisture, nitrogen, oxygen, carbon, sugars, pH and secondary metabolites.

The last chapter is a hymn to the importance of leaves, as leaf litter carries large amounts of microorganisms that aid the breakdown of organic matter. This chapter also acts as a reminder about why we might want to compost in the first place. Interestingly, at no point in this book does the author tell you how to compost; there are already reams of literature on the topic, he says. This is primarily an analysis of the layers of the heap, and as such, an absolutely riveting read.





**EDEN'S KEEPERS: THE LIVES AND GARDENS OF HUMPHREY WATERFIELD AND NANCY TENNANT**

by Sarah Barclay

Clearview Books, £25  
ISBN 978-1908337634

*The page-turning love story of two exceptional 20th-century garden makers, written by one of Tennant's granddaughters.*

*Reviewer Ambra Edwards is a writer and garden historian.*

This book is only tangentially about gardens. And yet gardens form the very core of the story, for it is above all through gardens that the love is expressed between the competent, clever, deeply musical painter and campaigner Nancy Tennant, and the much younger object of her affections, Humphrey Waterfield, who for decades remained what we might nowadays call her 'gay best friend'. Yet the term hardly does justice to the deep and complex relationship between this generous-hearted woman and her charming, gifted, emotionally infantile and monstrously selfish, not-quite-lover.

Shortly before the Second World War, they began work on a garden together, Hill Pasture, near Nancy's family home in Essex. News of the garden, with Nancy's lyrical evocation of springtime in England, is what sustains Humphrey through the brutalities of war. On his return, it becomes his purpose, admired by the early 1970s as

'the most beautiful small garden in England'.

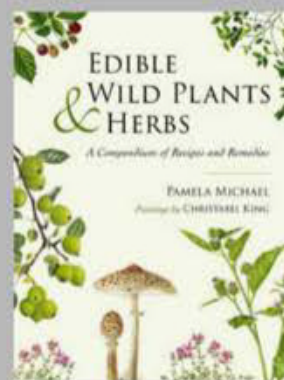
However, for most gardeners, Waterfield is more closely associated with Le Clos du Peyronnet, the internationally famous garden in Menton, France. This was the home of his parents, hastily abandoned when the Nazis invaded France, and restored from ruin after the war to become one of the great glories of the Riviera. Save for a few blurry, black-and-white photos, there is frustratingly little about it.

Nor is there more than passing mention of Abbots Ripton Hall, the garden Waterfield designed in Cambridgeshire (not Yorkshire – an editorial oversight) or the work he did at Greys Court.

So those seeking to learn more about this still relatively little-known artist-gardener (the famous American designer Lanning Roper, for one, rated him, eulogising his talents in *Country Life*) will feel short-changed, but all can enjoy a poignant love story, rich in historical detail.

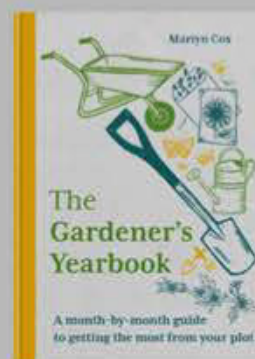
## Other books

From indoor displays to plant-inspired self-help and the wild side of gardening, the best of the rest of this month's books.



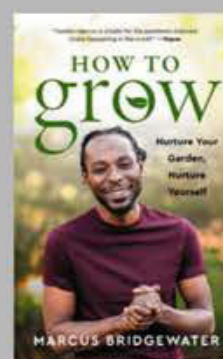
**EDIBLE WILD PLANTS AND HERBS**

by Pamela Michael  
Grub Street, £25  
ISBN 978-1911667346  
Both a field guide and cookbook for budding foragers, with illustrations by one of the country's leading botanical artists.



**THE GARDENER'S YEARBOOK**

by Martyn Cox  
Mitchell Beazley, £18.99  
ISBN 978-1784728151  
An experienced horticulturist's monthly guide to gardening, with wise, clear and helpful advice on tackling the essential tasks and dealing with problems.



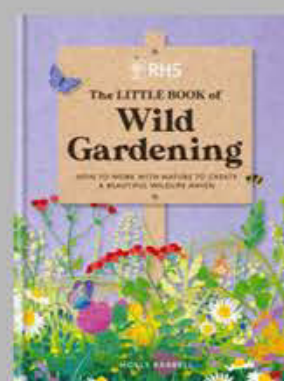
**HOW TO GROW**

by Marcus Bridgewater  
HarperOne, £17.99  
ISBN 978-0063141445  
The social media star known as Garden Marcus shares tips on caring for oneself and one's plants, with lessons for growth rooted in his gardening experiences.



**HOW TO PLANT A ROOM AND GROW A HAPPY HOME**

by Morgan Doane and Erin Harding  
Laurence King Publishing, £12.99  
ISBN 978-0857829061  
By the authors of *How to Raise a Plant and Make it Love You Back*. Features step-by-step plant projects and styling ideas.



**THE LITTLE BOOK OF WILD GARDENING**

by Holly Farrell  
Mitchell Beazley, £14.99  
ISBN 978-1784728335  
How to embrace a natural approach to gardening. Divided into sections for different garden areas, from flowerbeds to water features.



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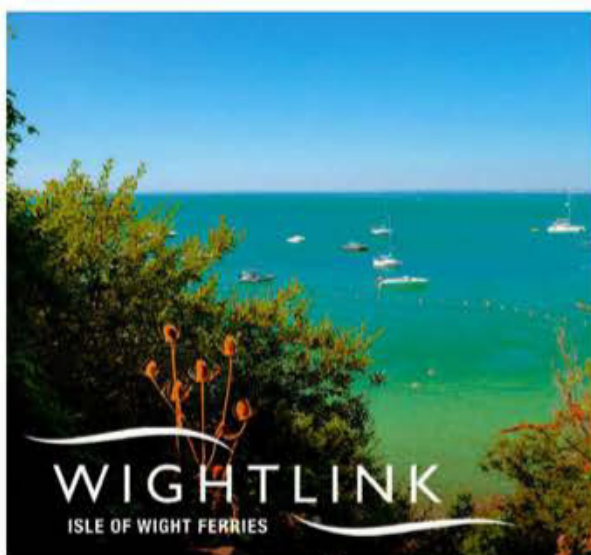
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## HOW TO COOK PASTA

A handy guide from Pasta Evangelists to get your pasta tasting just like it does in Italy!

### *It all starts with the water*

Your water needs to be at a rolling boil with plenty of salt – 1 litre of water for every 100g of pasta and 10g of salt for each litre.

### *Say no to snapping*

Snapping long pasta shapes is a sin. Let strands fan out, easing them into the water with a spoon as they soften.

### *Stir, stir and stir again*

The best way to stop pasta sticking is by giving it a good stir as soon as you add your shapes to the water, and at regular intervals whilst the pasta cooks.

### *Time to taste*

You want pasta cooked al dente, and the best way to test this is

to taste it. For dried pasta, aim to taste your pasta around two minutes before the indicated cooking time. Fresh pasta usually cooks within four minutes, so test it after a couple of minutes.

### *Don't waste your water*

Save a big cup of the starchy cooking water – the excess starch helps the sauce bond to the pasta.



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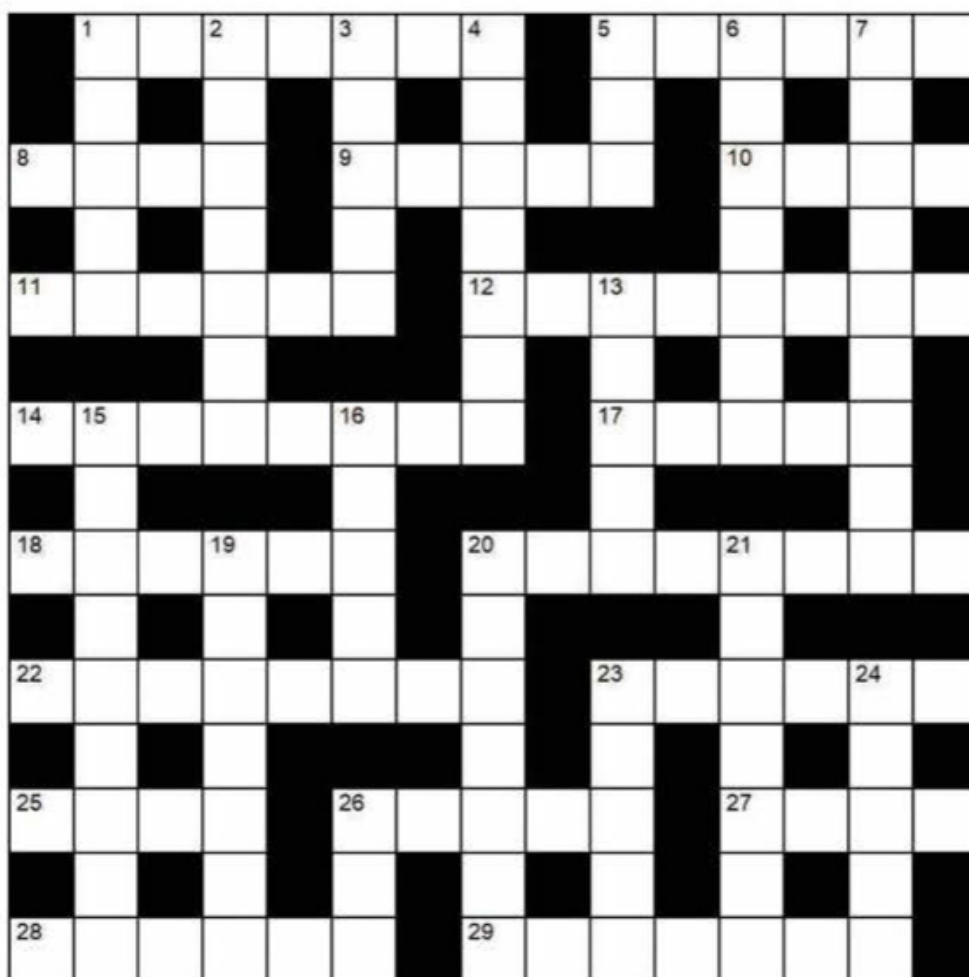
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# Crossword



#### ACROSS

- 1 Tie up an unruly... colourful annual with funnel-shaped flowers (7)  
5 View in arboreta – spectacular! (6)  
8 Underground bud of eg a snowdrop – it lights up! (4)  
9 Pea-like flower, genus *Vicia* – etc in verandah's extremes (5)  
10 Point of a garden fork? (4)  
11 Daisy eg \_\_\_\_ *perennis* (6)  
12/18 A hebe with pink-edged, green/cream leaves – ‘Aurora Borealis’? (8,6)  
14 Sealed glass plant containers (8)  
17 Tool that makes fence post holes – uninteresting sort? (5)  
18 See 12 across  
20 Family of *Pinus* and *Picea* genera – I confused with pea cane (8)  
22 Patricia replaces carbon with nitrogen for genus of herbaceous plants with sprays of small flowers (8)  
23 Plant crowns from which new shoots grow – simple seats (6)  
25 Classic shape of a domed cloche (4)  
26 One of Eden Project's domed plant enclosures (5)  
27 Container that might be recycled eg (most appropriately) for a kitchen garden (4)  
28 *Trachycarpus fortunei*, \_\_\_\_ palm ... anchusa endlessly spoilt (6)  
29 Snowdrop with green markings at the tip named after an Irish county (7)

#### DOWN

- 1 Cut back superfluous plant growth (5)  
2 Shaped like the drooping flowers in *Kniphofia* spikes (7)  
3 See 26 down  
4 Trailing succulent with heart-shaped leaves and small magenta flowers ... ruined a pineta (7)  
5 Tree with winged fruit ‘keys’ (3)  
6 Insectivorous perennial of eg genus *Sarracenia*, common name \_\_\_\_ plant (7)  
7 Common name for daisy-like flower *Senecio cruentus* (9)  
13 Bird which, if ragged, is a type of champion (5)  
15 A David Austin pale-pink/apricot rose named for a Royal platinum celebration (9)  
16 Exuded by eg *Eucalyptus*... from spores (infected) (5)  
19 Hazel fences – problems to be overcome? (7)  
20 A named series of colourful phlox – and a showy butterfly (7)  
21 Genus of Mexican orange blossom – a coyish combination (7)  
23 Wonderful, what water-retaining granules do when wet! (5)  
24 Osier leaves are \_\_\_\_-shaped (5)  
26/3 Frost-resistant blackcurrant and Britain's highest mountain (3,5)

• Solutions to this issue's crossword will be printed in the September issue

#### SOLUTIONS TO JULY CROSSWORD

ACROSS 7 Tepal 9 Rock cress 11 Campsis 12 Dierama 13/29 Sun Baby 14 Tasso 15 Clean 16 Violets 18/27 Lantern Tree 20 Roses 22 Rosea 24 Sag 26 Agretti 28 Robinia 30 Tumbelina 31 Bract.

DOWN 1 Stocks 2 Elms 3 Irises 4 Acid soil 5 Acme 6 Sesame 8 Pimento 10 Shannon 14 Trees 15 Canna 16 Verdant 17 Surfinia 19 Elsanta 21 Shrimp 23 Spread 25 Grafts.



# Nursery guide

*Get inspired for the summer season  
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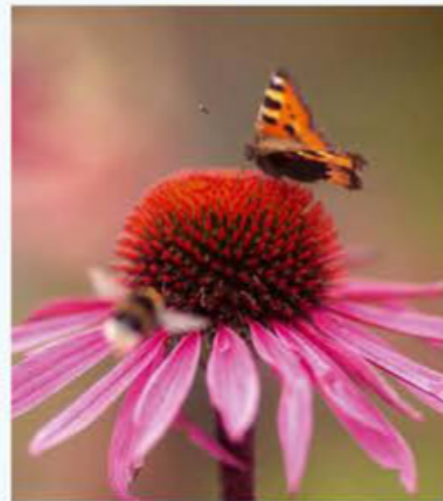
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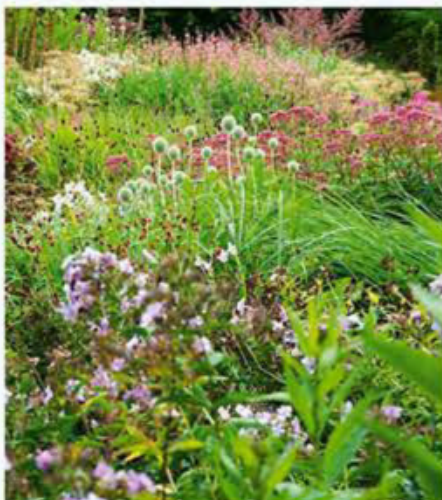
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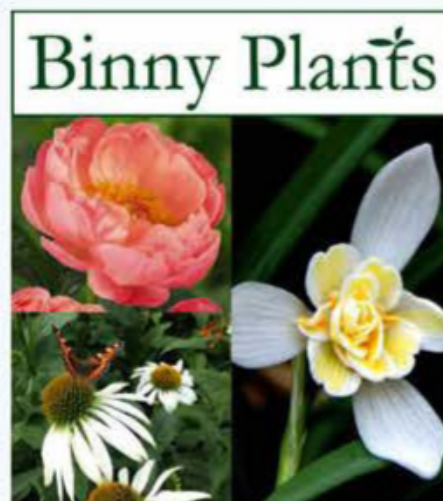
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*Summer is a great time to visit this collection of stunning gardens*



## 1 THE LASKETT

Created from a bare four-acre field, this remarkable garden is a creative memorial by Sir Roy Strong CH. One of England's most hidden and private gardens until earlier this century. Visitors come from all over the world to see this remarkable and inspirational creation.

Much Birch, Hereford HR2 8HZ | 01372 384045 | [thelaskett.org.uk](http://thelaskett.org.uk)



## 2 SISSINGHURST CASTLE GARDEN NATIONAL TRUST

The Sissinghurst Series: our head gardener Troy Scott Smith hosts a variety of intimate lectures with guests James Basson, Dan Pearson, Charles Dowding and Juliet Sargeant. With topics including Mediterranean landscapes, organic farming and our connection with nature.

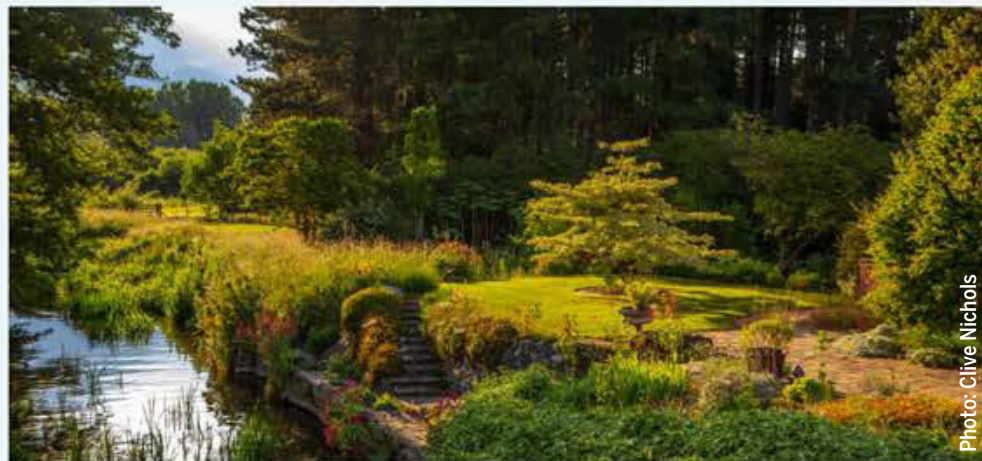
Nr Cranbrook, Kent TN17 2AB | [nationaltrust.org.uk/sissinghurst-castle-garden](http://nationaltrust.org.uk/sissinghurst-castle-garden)



## 4 BLUEBELL ARBORETUM & NURSERY

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## 3 FULLERS MILL

A tranquil, award-winning seven-acre garden on the banks of the River Lark. It combines a beautiful site of light dappled woodland with a plantsman's collection of unusual shrubs, perennials, lilies and marginal plants. It is a garden of truly year-round interest.

West Stow, Bury Saint Edmunds IP28 6HD | 01284 728888 | [fullersmill.org.uk](http://fullersmill.org.uk)



## 5 YORK GATE

A one-acre magical masterpiece situated near Leeds. A Grade II national heritage garden, designed in a series of 'rooms' interlinked through a succession of vistas, York Gate is one of the finest small gardens in the country. **Booking essential.**

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## 7 THE SAVILL GARDEN

This haven of beautiful gardens and woodland combines traditional and contemporary styles, with Royal connections throughout. The height of summer sees the herbaceous borders alive with bold yellow, oranges and red, while colourful hydrangeas in Summer Wood carry the spectacle into September. Englefield Green, Surrey TW20 0UJ | [windsorgreatpark.co.uk](http://windsorgreatpark.co.uk)



## 8 BELVOIR CASTLE

Belvoir Castle's gardens and lakes are a wonderful place in which to unwind and lose yourself. Step back in time as you explore 'Capability' Brown's lost landscape on exhilarating walks through formal planting and acres of beautifully restored woodland.

Grantham, Leicestershire NG32 1PE | [belvoircastle.com](http://belvoircastle.com)



## 9 THE YORKSHIRE ARBORETUM

The Yorkshire Arboretum offers 120 acres of peace and tranquillity in the heart of North Yorkshire. Experience exceptional natural beauty, a botanically diverse tree collection, sweeping vistas, lakes and meadows. Just 30 minutes from York, it's yours to explore!

The Yorkshire Arboretum, Castle Howard, York YO60 7BY | [yorkshirearboretum.org](http://yorkshirearboretum.org)



## 10 HOWICK HALL GARDENS & ARBORETUM

Howick Hall Gardens & Arboretum have been owned by the Grey family since 1319. Discover the history of the 2nd Earl, after whom the famous tea is named, wander through the beautiful gardens or for the more energetic explore the arboretum.

Howick, Northumberland NE66 3LB | 01665 577285 | [howickhallgardens.com](http://howickhallgardens.com)



## 11 HESTERCOMBE GARDENS

Hestercombe encompasses 50 acres of quintessential Somerset gardens, spanning three centuries of garden design. The estate offers a unique combination and varied experience of the Georgian Landscape Garden (designed 1750s), the Victorian Shrubbery and the Edwardian Formal Gardens (early 1900s).

Taunton, Somerset TA2 8LG | 01823 413923 | [hestercombe.com](http://hestercombe.com)



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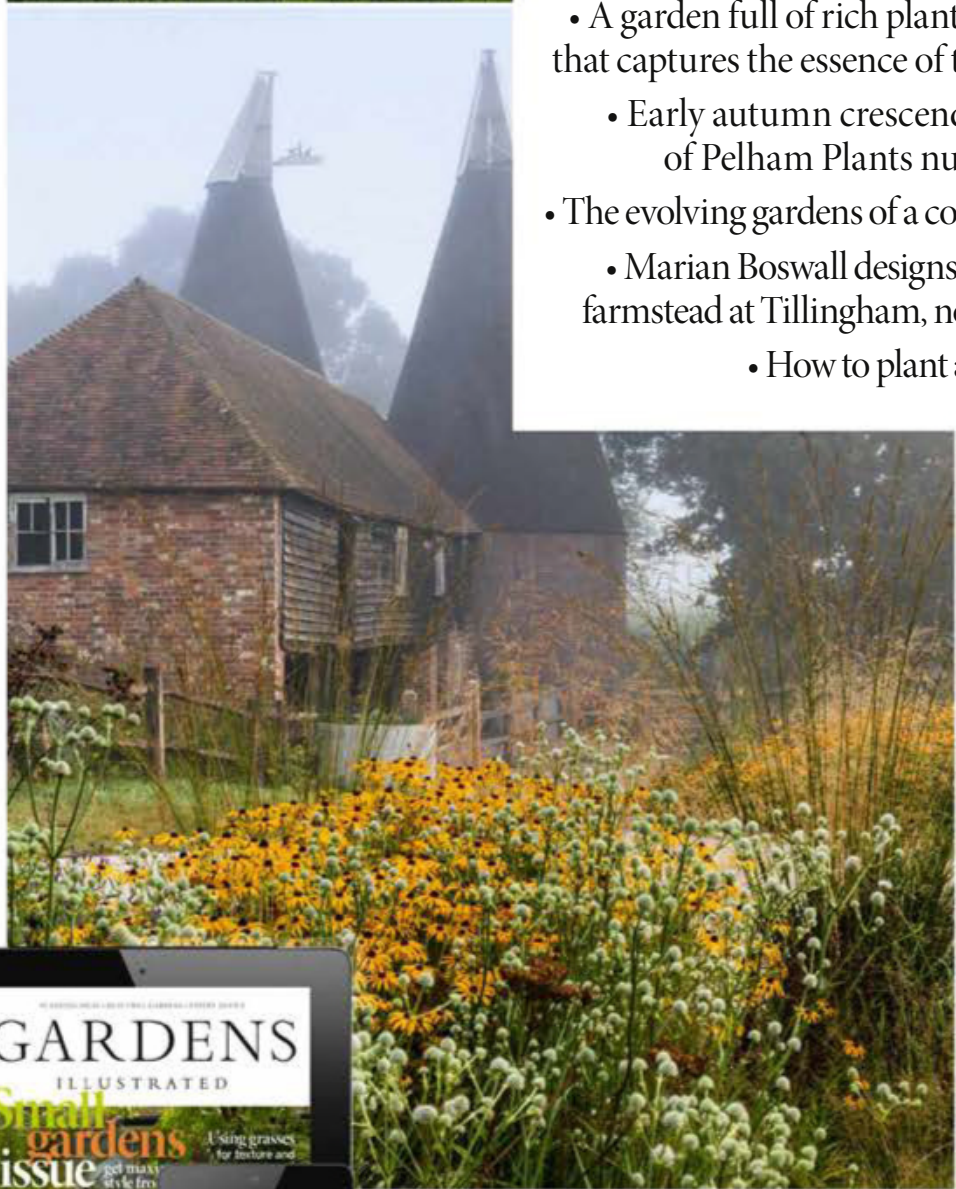


# GARDENS

ILLUSTRATED

## SEPTEMBER

- A garden full of rich planting and art in Connecticut that captures the essence of the landscape in which it sits
- Early autumn crescendo in the cottage garden of Pelham Plants nursery in East Sussex
- The evolving gardens of a country house in Warwickshire
  - Marian Boswall designs a gravel garden on an old farmstead at Tillingham, now a winery and restaurant
  - How to plant a bulb meadow



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ILLUSTRATION BY ALICE PATTULO

# GARDENS IMMEMORIAL

The ephemeral environment that constitutes the garden is notoriously tricky to capture in words and pictures. It doesn't stop us trying, though

by Alice Vincent

In the depths of January I stood in the corner of the garden – under the tree, against the old brick wall – and remembered what had been there six months earlier. Spires of dusky-pink 'Summer King' foxgloves, clouds of feathery fennel. A wayward branch, laden with Victoria plums. The winter beds were comparatively bare, dotted with the keen growth of this year's echinops and hardy geraniums. A few adventitious allium shoots.

Afterwards, I went upstairs and scrolled through photographs of the garden in the summer on my iPhone. Honestly? I was surprised by how beautiful it looked, this happy tangle of ferocious growth. It held the same sharp, poignant realisation that comes with stumbling across a photograph taken of your younger self: that you were lovely, really, and wholly incapable of accepting it at the time.

Gardens are infamously difficult to document. How do you capture the smell of sweet peas in June, or the first hit of *Sarcococca* in January? Those who work in our cherished historic gardens are archaeologists, too, unearthing records of what hardy annual was sown decades before in an attempt to capture some of the magic originally grown there.

And yet, we persist. I take endless photos of the garden, but often wish I'd taken more. Months, seasons later, the unglamorous shots of certain aspects are far more useful than the flattering close-ups of a tulip in full swell. It is the context that offers the best comparison.

Despite being a person who writes about gardening, I am hopeless at keeping a record of it. I long to be the kind of grower who has a dedicated diary, filled in each day with the weather and rainfall, of what is growing and what is behind. I have started a couple over the years, but they are never quite particular enough about the details and only, in very boring or floriferous weeks, filled in daily.

I do, however, love reading other people's. A couple of years ago, I saw Derek Jarman's large, square sketchbooks open in glass cases at an exhibition, his elegantly sloping writing filling the creamy paper without a speck of dirt. I return to Jarman's diaries often, usually in the form of a battered paperback of *Modern Nature*. He is a brilliant garden diarist: enthusiastic, opinionated, perfectly conscious of the world beyond his garden – which was, of course, boundaried by the horizon.

In *Grounded*, released this April, author Lulah Ellender finds her late mother's garden diary. 'I thought it had been lost,'

Ellender writes. 'And I realised that, of course, she was physically tethered here... most vibrantly, in the plants still growing in the garden, six months after her death.' It's impossible to ignore the quiet intimacy of unfurling leaves and wet springs in her mother's absence. Her diary entries gently guide us through Ellender's year of grief and upheaval.

Ellender's mother's diary was among a pile of books in the corner of the kitchen. Thousands of others will stay unopened, lost in the flotsam of a life a person leaves behind. But for those that are read – are published, are revisited – there opens a strangely fertile gulf between the writing of a garden diary and the reading of it. It's from this space that ideas and imaginary gardens grow.

Do we write diaries to record, or to be read? Do we take photographs of our gardens to admire or to remember? I think the act of fixing our gardens for the future – whether that's for ourselves, trying to work out if the frost was as late last year, or for those new custodians of the land we used to tend – is as much an attempt to pause time. Some flowers open only for a day, summer can be so brief. We record it in the hope it can last forever. □





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